Divine Conduct:

OR, THE

MYSTERY

OF

Providence.

WHEREIN

The *Being* and *Efficacy* of *Providence* is *Asserted*; and *Vindicated*: The *Methods* of *Providence* as it passes through the several *Stages* of our Lives opened; and the proper Course of improving all Providences directed, in a Treatise upon *Psalm* 57. 2.

By *John Flavell*, Preacher of the Gospel.

Totam Dei Providentiam omnia tandem dirigere ad gloriam suam, & ad Electorum salutem; ac tum quiescere Spiritum Dei, cum videt Impios damnari, ac Electos servari; ex qua utraque re Deus glorificetur. Hieron. Zanchii Miscell. Tom. 2. pag. 199.

Psal. 111. 4. זֵכֶר עָשָׂה לְנִפְלְאֹתָיו *memoriam fecit mirabilium suorum.*

LONDON:

Printed by S. Bridge, for Tho. Parkhurst at the *Bible* and *Three Crowns* in *Cheapside* near *Mercers* Chappel, 1698.

609.6
Fawell

Andover

7737
6

TO THE

Right Honourable

WILLIAM

DUKE of

BEDFORD,

Lord *RUSSEL* of *Thorne-haugh*, and Knight of the Moſt Noble Order of the *GARTER*.

My LORD,

IT was a weighty, and ſavoury Speech, which a Pious Pen once ſaved from your Lordſhip's Lips, *viz.* That *You accounted the Prayers of Gods Miniſters and People, the beſt Walls about your Houſe.* He that ſo accounts, doubtleſs underſtands, that Prayer engageth Providence, *Iſa.* 45. 11. And Providence ſo engaged, is the ſureſt Munition, *Job* 1. 10. Mr. *Iſaac Ambroſe Epiſt.* to his *Ultima.*

Many great Men encloſe their Dwellings with an high Wall, but the Foundation (as the Wiſeſt of Men obſerves) is laid in their own Conceits, *Prov.* 18. 11. Yea,

in Sin, and crying Sin too, *Hab.* 2. 12. Of ſuch Walls we may ſay, as the *Oracle* to *Phocas*, ἐὰν ὑψοῖς τὰ τείχη ἕως ἀέρος, ἔνδον τὸ κακόν. If the Building emulate the Skies, yet Sin being in the Bottom, all will Totter.

'Tis a fond Vanity, to think of enſuring a Deſtiny that can control the Stars, and endure the aſſaults of Fortune, (as they love to ſpeak) whilſt Providence is not engaged for them, no not ſo much as by a bare acknowledgement.

My Lord, It is not the vaſt Bulk of an Eſtate, nor the beſt humane Security in the World, but the vigilant Care of Divine Providence, that guards both It, and its Owners from the ſtroke of Ruine. 'Tis the fear of God within us, and the Providence of God round about us, which make the firm and ſolid Baſis of all ſanctified and durable Proſperity. It is beyond all Debate, that there is a Providence of God always enfolding thoſe in Everlaſting Arms, that bear his Image. The Impreſs of that Image upon you, and the Embraces of thoſe Arms about you, will advance you higher, and ſecure you better, than your Noble Birth or Eſtate could ever do.

My Lord, Providence hath molded you, *è meliori luto*, made you both the Offspring and Head of an Illuſtrious Family, planted you in a rich and pleaſant Soyl, cauſed many Noble Branches to ſpring from you, drawn your Life even unto Old-Age, through the Delights and Honours of this World And now that you have tried all thoſe Things that make the faireſt Pretenſions to Happineſs: What have you found in all theſe painted Beauties, and falſe glozing Excellencies which have ſucceſſively courted you? Which of them all can you pronounce Self-deſirable? Which can you call *objectum par amori?* What is it to have the Fleſh indulged, Senſe gratified, Fancy tickled? What have you found in Meats and Drinks,

Drinks, in ſtately Houſes and pleaſant Gardens; in Gold and Silver, in Honour and Applauſe to match the Appetite of your Nobler Soul? Surely (*My Lord*) to turn from them all with a generous Diſdain, as one that knows where to find better Entertainment; is much more *Noble*, than wholly to immerſe, and loſe our Spirits in thoſe ſenſual Fruitions, as many do, alas, too many in our Days!

We are fallen into the dregs of Time, *Senſuality* runs every where into *Atheiſm*. *Providentia peperit divitias, ſed filia devoravit matrem.* The largeſſes of Providence have ſo blinded, and perfectly ſtupified the Minds of ſome, that they neither own a Providence, nor a God, who do σαρκοποιεῖν τὸν ἄνθρωπον ὅλον, καὶ τὴν Ψυχὴν ταῖς τοῦ σώματος ἡδοναῖς καταβωλεῖν, as *Plutarch* both wittily and judiciouſly reply'd upon *Colotes* the *Epicurean*.

But bleſſed be God, there is a ſincere part, both of the *Nobles* and *Commons* of *England*, which this Gangrene hath not yet touched, and I hope, never ſhall.

My Lord, It is both your Honour and Intereſt, to be ὥλως τοῦ κρείττονος, the entire and devoted Servant of Providence. It was once the wiſh of a good Man, *optarem id me eſſe Deo, quod eſt mihi manus mea.* This is the moſt Noble and Divine Life that can be, to live and act in this World upon Eternal Deſigns. To look upour ſelves and what we have, as things devoted to God; not to be content that Providence ſhould ſerve it ſelf of us, (for ſo it doth even of thoſe things which underſtand nothing of it) but to ſtudy wherein we may ſerve Providence, and be inſtrumental in its Hand for the good of many; this is truly Honourable; *Quo magis quis Deo vivit, eo evadit nobilior, clarior, divinior.*

How much God hath honoured you in this reſpect, the World will underſtand better, when your Lordſhip ſhall be gathered to your Fathers, and ſleep in the Duſt,

then he that praiſeth, cannot be ſuſpected of flattery; nor he that is praiſed, be moved with vain glory: But the Approbation of God, is infinitely better than the moſt glorious Name among Men, before, or after Death.

And as it is moſt *honourable* to *ſerve*, ſo you will find it moſt comfortable to *obſerve* the Ways of God in his Providence: To compoſe our ſelves to think of the *Conduct of Providence* through all the *Stages* of Life we have hitherto paſſed. To note the reſults of its profound Wiſdom, the Effects of its tender Care, the diſtinguiſhing Fruits of its ſpecial Bounty: To mark how Providences have gone along ſtep by ſtep with the Promiſes, and both with us, till they have now brought us near to our Everlaſting Reſt, Oh how delectable! how tranſporting are ſuch Meditations as theſe!

My Lord, It is the Deſign of this *Manual*, to aſſert the *Being* and *Efficacy* of Providence againſt the *Atheiſm* of the Times; and to diſplay the Wiſdom and Care of the Providence of God in all the Concerns of that People who are really his. 'Tis probable, if your Lordſhip will ſtoop to ſuch a vulgar Compoſure, ſomewhat may occur of a grateful reliſh to your pious Mind. I confeſs, It is not accommodated, either in exactneſs of Method, or elegancy of Style, to gratifie the Curious; nor yet is it deſtitute of what may pleaſe and profit the truly gracious.

Should I here recite the Pleaſure and Advantages reſulting from an humble and heedful eying of the Methods of Providence, it would look more like a *Book* in an *Epiſtle*, than an *Epiſtle* in a *Book*. One taſte of ſpiritual Senſe will ſatisfie you better, than all the accurate Deſcriptions and high *Encomiums* that the moſt elegant Pen can beſtow upon it.

My Lord, It is not that eminent Station that ſome Per-

Perſons retain (in Civil reſpects) above the Vulgar, that will enable them to penetrate the Myſteries, and reliſh the ſweetneſs of Providence better than others; (for doubtleſs many that live immediately upon Providence for daily Bread, do thereby gain a nearer acquaintance with it, than thoſe, whoſe outward Enjoyments flow to them in a more plentiful and ſtated Courſe) but thoſe that excel in Grace and Experience, thoſe that walk and converſe with God in his Diſpenſations towards them; theſe are the Perſons who are moſt fully and immediately capable of theſe high Pleaſures of the Chriſtian Life. The daily flow and increaſe whereof in your Lordſhips Noble Perſon and Family, is the hearty Deſire of

Your LORDSHIPS *moſt humble Servant,*

From my Study at *Dartmouth*, *Aug.* 10. 1677.

JOHN FLAVEL.

TO THE

Ingenious *READERS*,

Thoſe eſpecially who are the heedful

OBSERVERS

Of the WAYS of

Providence.

Reader,

THERE are two Ways whereby the Bleſſed God condeſcends to manifeſt Himſelf to Men, His Word, *and his* Works. *Of the written Word we muſt ſay, No Words like theſe were ever written ſince the beginning of Time, which can (as one ſpeaks) take Life and Root in the Soul, yea, doth it as really as the Seed doth in the Ground: And are fitted to be engraffed and naturalized there, ſo as no Coalition in Nature can be more real than this,* James 1. 21. *This is the moſt tranſcendent and glorious* Medium *of Manifeſtation*; God hath magnified his Word above all his Name, *Pſalm* 138. 2.

However, the Manifeſtations of God by his Works, whether of Creation *or* Providence *have their value, and Glory: But the prime Glory and Excellency of his* Providential Works

Works *conſiſts in this, that they are the very fulfillings and real Accompliſhments of his written Word. By a wiſe and heedful Attendance hereunto, we might learn that excellent Art, which is (not unfitly) called by ſome* Scientia Architectonica, *an Art to clear the Myſterious occurrences of Providence, by reducing them to the written Word, and* there *lodge them as* Effects *in their proper* Cauſes. *And doubtleſs, this is one of the rareſt Eſſays Men could purſue againſt* Atheiſm, *to ſhew, not only how* Providences *concur in a moſt obvious tendency to confirm this great Concluſion,* Thy Word is Truth; *but how it ſometimes extorts alſo the Confeſſion of a* God, *and the Truth of his* Word, *from thoſe very Tongues which have boldly denied it.*

Æſchyles *the* Perſian *relating their diſcomfiture by the* Grecian *Army, makes this notable Obſervation,* "*When the* Grecian *Forces hotly purſued* "*us,* (ſaith he) *and we muſt needs venture over the great* "*Water* Strymon, *then Frozen; but beginning to Thaw;* "*when a hundred to one we had all dyed for it, with mine* "*Eyes I then ſaw many of thoſe* Gallants *whom I had heard* "*ſo boldly maintain,* there was no God, *every one upon* "*their Knees, with Eyes and Hands lifted up, begging hard* "*for Help and Mercy, and entreating that the Ice might* "*hold till they got over. Many thouſand Seals hath Providence forced the very Enemies of God to ſet to his Truths, which greatly tends to our Confirmation therein; but eſpecially, to ſee how the* Word *and* Providence *of God do enlighten each other; and how the Scriptures contain all thoſe Events, both great and ſmall, which are diſpoſed by Providence in their Seaſons: And how not only the Promiſes of the Word, are in the general faithfully fulfilled to the Church in all her Exigences and Diſtreſſes; but in Particular to every member of it; they being all furniſhed by Providence with multitudes of Experiences to this Uſe and End. O how uſeful are ſuch Obſervations!* Æſchiles in Tragœd.

And as the Profit and Uſe, ſo the Delight and Pleaſure reſulting

ſulting from the Obſervations of Providence, *is exceeding great. It will doubtleſs be a part of our Entertainment in* Heaven, *to view with tranſporting Delight, how the Deſigns and Methods were laid to bring us thither: And what will be a part of our bleſſedneſs in* Heaven, *may well be allowed to have a prime Ingrediency into our* Heaven *upon* Earth. *To ſearch for Pleaſure among the due Obſervations of* Providence, *is to ſearch for Water in the Ocean: For* Providence *doth not only, ultimately Deſign to bring you to Heaven, but (as intermediate thereunto) to bring (by this means) much of* Heaven *into your Souls in the way thither.*

How great a Pleaſure is it to diſcern how the moſt wiſe God is providentially ſteering all to the Port of his own Praiſe, and his Peoples Happineſs, whilſt the whole World is buſily employed in managing the Sails, and tugging the Oars, with a quite oppoſite Deſign and Purpoſe? To ſee how they promote *his deſign by* oppoſing *it, and* fulfil *his Will by* reſiſting *it,* enlarge *his Church by* ſcattering *it, and make their reſt to come the more ſweet to their Souls, by making their Condition ſo reſtleſs in the World. This is pleaſant to obſerve in general: But to record and note its particular deſigns upon our ſelves; with what profound Wiſdom, infinite tenderneſs, and inceſſant vigilancy it hath managed all that concerns us from firſt to laſt, is raviſhing and tranſporting.*

O what an Hiſtory might we compile of our own Experiences, whilſt with a melting Heart we trace the footſteps of Providence all along the way it hath led us to this Day; and ſet our Remarques upon its more eminent Performances for us, in the ſeveral Stages of our Life!

Here it Prevented, *and there it* Delivered: *Here it* Directed, *and there it* Corrected. *In this it* Grieved, *and in that it* Relieved. *Here was the* Poiſon, *and there the* Antidote. *This Providence* raiſed *a diſmal Cloud, and that* diſpelled *it again. This* ſtraitned, *and that* enlarged. *Here a* want, *and there a* ſupply. *This Relation* withered, *and that* ſpringing *up in its room. Words cannot expreſs the*

high

high Delights and Gratifications, a gracious Heart may find in ſuch Employments as this.

O what a World of Rarieties are to be found in Providence! The blind heedleſs World makes nothing of them: They cannot find one ſweet Bit, *where a gracious Soul would make a* rich Feaſt. Plutarch *relates very exactly, how* Timoleon *was miraculouſly delivered from the Conſpiracy of two Murderers, by their meeting in the very nick of Time a certain Perſon, who to Revenge the Death of his Father, killed one of them, juſt as they were ready to give* Timoleon *the fatal blow, though he knew nothing of the Buſineſs, and ſo* Timoleon *eſcaped the Danger. And what did this wonderful Work of Providence think you, yield the Relator? Why, though he was one of the moſt learned and ingenious among the* Heathen Sages; *yet all he made of it, was only this,* The Spectators (*ſaith he*) wondered greatly at the Artifice and Contrivance which Fortune uſes. *This is all he could ſee in it. Had a ſpiritual and wiſe Chriſtian had the* Diſſecting *and* Anatomizing *of ſuch a Work of Providence, what Glory would it have yielded to God! What Comfort and Encouragement to the Soul; The* Bee *makes a ſweeter Meal upon one ſingle Flower, than the* Ox *doth upon the whole Meadow, where thouſands of them grow.*

O Reader, if thy Heart be ſpiritual and well ſtockt with Experience, if thou haſt recorded the Ways of Providence towards thee, and wilt but allow thy ſelf Time to reflect upon them; what a Life of Pleaſure maiſt thou Live! What an Heaven upon Earth doth this way lead thee into! I will not here tell thee, what I have met in this Path, leſt it ſhould ſeem to ſavour of too much Vanity; non eſt religio ubi omnia patent. *There are ſome Delights and Enjoyments in the Chriſtian Life, which are and muſt be encloſed. But Try it thy ſelf, Taſte and See, and thou wilt need no other inducement; thine own Experience will be the moſt powerful Oratory to perſwade thee to the ſtudy and ſearch of Providence.*

Hiſtories are uſually read with delight: When once the Fancy

cy is catcht, a Man knows not how to diſengage himſelf from it. I am greatly miſtaken, if the Hiſtory of our own Lives, if it were well drawn up, and diſtinctly peruſed, would not be the pleaſanteſt Hiſtory that ever we read in our Lives.

The enſuing Treatiſe is an Eſſay to that Purpoſe, in which thou wilt find ſome remarques ſet upon Providence, in its paſſage through the ſeveral Stages of our Life. But Reader, thou only art able to compile the Hiſtory of Providence for thy ſelf, becauſe the Memorials *that furniſh it, are only in thine own Hands. However, here thou maiſt find a pattern, and general Rules to direct thee in that great and difficult work, which is the very end, and deſign of this* Manual.

I have not had much regard to the Dreſs, and Ornament in which this Diſcourſe is to go abroad, for I am debtor both to the ſtrong and weak, the wiſe and fooliſh: And in all my Obſervation I have not found, that ever God hath made much uſe of laboured Periods, Rhetorical Flowers, and Elegancies to improve the Power of Religion in the World: Yea, I have obſerved, how Providence hath ſometimes rebuked good Men, when upon other Subjects they have too much affected thoſe pedantick Fooleries in withdrawing from them its uſual aids, and expoſing them to ſhame; and much more may it do ſo, when it ſelf is the Subject.

Reader, if thy ſtomach be nice and ſqueaſie, and nothing will reliſh with thee, but what is Spruce and Elegant, there are ſtore of ſuch Compoſures in the World, upon which thou mayſt even ſurfeit thy curious Fancy: Mean Time there will be found ſome that will bleſs God for what thou deſpiſeſt, and make many a ſweet Meal upon what thou loatheſt.

I will add no more, but my hearty Prayers that Providence will direct this Treatiſe to ſuch Hands, in ſuch ſeaſons, and ſo bleſs and proſper its Deſign, that God may have Glory, thou mayſt have Benefit, and my Self comfort in the ſucceſs thereof, who am

Thine and the Churches Servant in
the Hand of Providence,
John Flavel.

A Catalogue of BOOKS *ſold by* Thomas Parkhurſt, *at the* Bible *and* Three Crowns, *in* Cheap-ſide *near* Mercers Chappel.

THE Fountain of Life open'd, or a Diſplay of Chriſt in his Eſſential and Mediatorial Glory; containing Forty two Sermons on various Texts. Wherein the Impetration of our Redemption by Jeſus Chriſt is orderly unfolded, as it was begun, carried on, and finiſhed by his Covenant Tranſaction, myſterious Incarnation, ſolemn Call and Dedication, bleſſed Offices, deep Abaſement and Supereminent Advancement.

A Treatiſe of the Soul of Man, wherein the Divine Original, excellent and immortal Nature of the Soul are opened; its Love and Inclination to the Body, with the neceſſity of its Separation from it, conſider'd and Improved. The Exiſtence, Operations and States of ſeparated Souls both in Heaven and Hell immediately after Death, aſſerted, diſcuſſed, and variouſly applied. Divers knotty and difficult Queſtions about departed Souls both Philoſophical and Theological, ſtated and determin'd.

The Method of Grace in bringing home the Eternal Redemption, contrived by the Father, and accompliſhed by the Son, through the Effectual Application of the Spirit unto Gods Elect, being the ſecond Part of Goſpel-Redemption.

The Divine Conduct or Myſtery of Providence, its Being and Efficacy aſſerted and vindicated: All the Methods of Providence in our Courſe of Life open'd, with Directions how to apply and improve them.

Navigation ſpiritualiz'd, or a new Compaſs for Seamen, conſiſting of Thirty Two Points of pleaſant Obſervations, profitable Applications, ſerious Reflections, all concluded with ſo many ſpiritual Poems, *&c.* Two

Two Treatiſes, the firſt of Fear, the ſecond the Righteous Mans Refuge in the evil Day.

A Saint indeed, the great Work of a Chriſtian.

A Touchſtone of Sincerity, or Signs of Grace, and Symptoms of Hypocriſie, being the ſecond Part of the Saint indeed.

A Token for Mourners, or boundaries for Sorrow for the Death of Friends.

Husbandry ſpiritualiz'd: Or the Heavenly uſe of Earthly Things. All theſe Ten by Mr. *John Flavel.*

A Funeral Sermon on the Death of that Pious Gentlewoman Mrs. *Judith Hammond*, late Wife of the Reverend Mr. *George Hammond*, Miniſter of the Goſpel in *London.*

Of Thoughtfulneſs for the Morrow. With an Appendix concerning the immoderate Deſire of foreknowing Things to come.

Of Charity in Reference to other Mens Sins.

The Redeemer's Tears wept over loſt Souls, in a Treatiſe on *Luke* 19. 41, 42. With an Appendix, wherein ſomewhat is occaſionally Diſcourſed concerning the Sin againſt the Holy Ghoſt, and how God is ſaid to Will the Salvation of them that Periſh.

A Sermon directing what we are to do after a ſtrict Enquiry whether or no we truly Love God.

A Funeral Sermon for Mrs. *Eſther Sampſon*, the late Wife of Mr. *Henry Sampſon*, Doctor of Phyſick, who Died *Nov.* 24. 1689.

The Carnality of Religious Contention. In two Sermons Preach'd at the *Merchants Lecture* in *Broadſtreet.*

A Calm and Sober Enquiry concerning the Poſſibility of a Trinity in the Godhead.

A Letter to a Friend concerning a Poſtſcript to the Defence of Dr. *Sherlock*'s Notion of the Trinity in Unity, relating to the Calm and Sober Enquiry upon the ſame Subject.

A View of that Part of the late Conſiderations Addreſt

dreſt to *H. H.* about the Trinity. Which concerns the Sober Enquiry on that Subject.

A Sermon Preach'd on the late Day of Thankſgiving, *Decemb.* 2. 1697. To which is Prefix'd Dr. *Bates*'s Congratulatory Speech to the King. All theſe Eleven by Mr. *John Howe*.

Proteſtant Union: Or, Principles of Religion, to which Engliſh Proteſtants agree. Wherein the Main Principles of Religion, owned by *Diſſenters*, agrees with the Articles and Homilies of the Church of *England*, in two Sheets, Price *Two Pence*.

The Main Principles of the Chriſtian Religion, in One Hundred and Seven Articles, or Aphoriſms, of the *Aſſemblies* Short Catechiſm farther Cleared and Confirmed by the Conſonant Doctrine, recorded in ſeveral Articles and Homilies of the Church of *England*, under theſe Four Heads, *viz.* 1. Of Things to be Believed comprehended in the *Creed*. 2. Of Things to be Done in the *Ten Commandments*. 3. Of Things to be Practiſed in the *Goſpel*, particularly the Two Sacraments. 4. Of Things to be Pray'd for in the *Lord's Prayer*. Theſe Two by Mr. *Tho. Adams*, M. A.

Several Diſcourſes concerning the actual Providence of God, divided into Three Parts. The Firſt treating of the Notion of it, eſtabliſhing the Doctrine, opening the principal Acts of it. Preſervation and Government of created Beings, with the particular Acts by which it ſo preſerves and governs them. The Second concerning the Specialities of it, the unſearchable Things of it. The Third concerning the Δυσνόητα or hard Chapters of it; in which an attempt is made to ſolve ſeveral appearances of Difficulty in the Motions of Providence, and to vindicate the Juſtice, Wiſdom and Holineſs of God.

Intercourſes of Divine Love between Chriſt and the Church, or the particular Believing Soul, open'd and improved in ſeveral Lectures upon the firſt and ſecond Chapters of the *Canticles*, in Two Vol.

A Diſcourſe againſt Tranſubſtantiation.

Thirteen Sermons on ſeveral Texts.

Defenſative Armour againſt four of Satans moſt fiery Darts, *viz.* Temptations to Atheiſtical and Blaſphemous Impreſſions and Thoughts, Self-Murther, Deſpair and Preſumption.

A Reaſonable Account, why ſome pious Nonconforming Miniſters in *England*, judge it ſinful for them to perform their Miniſterial Acts, in publick ſolemn Prayer, by the preſcribed Forms of others.

A Supplement to the Reaſonable Account.

The Vindication of Liturgies, Publiſhed by Dr. *Falkner*, proved no Vindication.

The Weavers Pocket Book, or Weaving ſpiritualiz'd, in a Diſcourſe, wherein Men in that Occupation, are inſtructed how to raiſe Heavenly Meditations, from the ſeveral Parts of their Work.

A Sermon upon the Happineſs of Brethren dwelling together in Unity.

The improveableneſs of Water-baptiſm.

An Exercitation on that Caſe of Conſcience, *viz.* Whether it be lawful for a Perſon to Act contrary to the Opinion of his own Conſcience formed from Arguments that appear to him probable, though not neceſſary and demonſtrative. All Twelve by *John Collinges*, D. D.

The Righteouſneſs of God revealed in the Goſpel; or an impartial Enquiry into the genuine Doctrine of St. *Paul*, in the great but much controverted Article of Juſtification. To which are prefixed the Epiſtles of the Right Reverend the Biſhops of *Worceſter*, *Ely*, and *Cheſter*.

The Friendly Interpoſer between the Authors of thoſe Papers; the one called, *A Report*; the other, *A Rebuke of that Report*. In order to a Reconciliation, between the Presbyterians and Independants. Theſe Two by Mr. *John Humphrey*.

Di-

Divine Conduct,
OR THE
MYSTERIE
OF
Providence:

Opened in a

TREATISE

Upon PSAL. 57. 2.

I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.

THE Greatneſs of God is a glorious, and unſearchable Myſterie. *The Lord moſt high is terrible; he is a great King over all the Earth*, Pſal. 47. 2. The condeſcenſion of the moſt high God to Men is alſo a profound Myſterie. *Though the Lord be high, yet hath he reſpect unto the lowly*, Pſal. 138. 6. But when both theſe meet together (as they do in this Scripture) they make up a matchleſs Myſterie. Here we find the moſt High God performing all things for a poor diſtreſſed creature.

It is the great support and solace of the Saints in all the distresses that befall them here, that there is a Wise Spirit sitting in all the wheels of motion, and governing the most excentrical Creatures and their most pernicious designs to blessed and happy issues. And indeed it were not worth while to live in a world κενῶ Θεῦ καὶ προνοίας devoid of God and Providence.

How deeply we are concerned in this matter, will appear by that great Instance, which this *Psalm* presents us with.

It was composed (as the Title notes) by *David* prayer-wise, when he hid himself from *Saul* in the *Cave*: And is inscribed with a double Title, *Altaschith Michtam of David. Altaschith* refers to the *scope*, and *Michtam* to the dignity of the Subject matter.

The former signifies *destroy not*, or let there be no slaughter, and may either refer to *Saul*, concerning whom he gave charge to his Servants not to destroy him; or rather, it hath reference to God, to whom in this great exigence he poured out his soul in this pathetical ejaculation, *Altaschith* destroy not.

Altaschith *ne perdas, scil.* vel 1. Saulem; *repressit enim suos* David *qui incitabant ipsum ut* Saulem *perderet.* *Vel* 2. *me ô Deus.* Geirus in loc. Michtam *ornamentum aureum vel aureolum carmen à* בחם (i. e.) *aurum optimum; quia Psalmus hic preciosus est instar auri.* Burgensis.

The later Title *Michtam* signifies a golden ornament, and so is suited to the choice and excellent matter of the *Psalm*, which much more deserves such a Title, than *Pythagoras* his golden Verses did.

Three things are remarkable in the former part of the *Psalm*, *Viz.* (1) His extream danger (2) His earnest address to God in that extremity

mity. (3.) The Arguments he pleads with God in that Addreſs.

1. His extream danger, expreſſed both in the Title, and body of the *Pſalm*. The Title tells us, this *Pſalm* was compoſed by him when he hid himſelf from *Saul* in the *Cave*. This Cave was in the Wilderneſs of *Engedi* among the broken Rocks where the wild Goats inhabited, an obſcure and deſolate hole; yet even thither the Envy of *Saul* purſued him, 1 *Sam.* 24. 1, 2. And now he that had been ſo long hunted as a Partridge upon the Mountains, ſeems to be encloſed in the Net; for the place was begirt with his Enemies, and having in this place no out-let another way, and *Saul* himſelf entring into the mouth of this Cave, in the ſides and creeks whereof he and his Men lay hid, and ſaw him; judge to how great an extremity, and to what a deſperate ſtate things where now brought: Well might he ſay, as it is ver. 4. *My ſoul is among Lyons, and I lye even among them that are ſet on fire.* What hope now remained? What but immediate Deſtruction could be expected?

Cùm autem locum in quo latebat cinctum eſſe ab exercitu Saulis videret, nec jam ullum effugium pateret, quod antea ſemper in ſimilibus periculis fecerat: nunc quoque ad deum confugit. Molerus in loc.

2. Yet this frights him not out of his Faith and Duty, but betwixt the Jaws of Death he prays, and earneſtly addreſſes himſelf to God for Mercy, *v.* 1. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me.* This excellent *Pſalm* was *compoſed* by him, when there was enough to *diſcompoſe* the beſt man in the world. The Repetition notes both the extremity of the danger, and the ardency of the Supplicant. Mercy, Mercy! Nothing but Mercy, and that exerting it ſelf in an extraordinary way, can now ſave him from Ruine.

3. The Arguments he pleads for obtaining Mercy in this diſtreſs, are very conſiderable.

(1.) He pleads his reliance upon God, as an

Argument to move Mercy. *Be merciful to me, O God, be merciful unto me, for my Soul trusteth in thee: yea in the shadow of thy Wings will I make my refuge, until these Calamities be overpast*, ver. 1. This his trust and dependance on God, though it be not Argumentative in respect of the dignity of the *Act*; yet it is so in respect, both of the nature of the *Object*, a compassionate God, who will not expose any that take shelter under his wings; and in respect of the *Promise*, whereby Protection is assured to them that fly to him for Sanctuary, *Isa.* 26. 3. *Thou wilt keep him in perfect Peace, whose mind is stayed on thee, because he trusteth in thee.* Thus he encourages himself from the Consideration of that God to whom he betakes himself.

(2.) He pleads former experiences of his help in past distresses, as an Argument encouraging hope under the present strait, *ver.* 2. *I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

In which Words I shall consider Two Things,

1. The Duty resolved upon,
2. The Encouragement to that Resolution.

1. The Duty resolved upon; *I will cry unto God*. Crying unto God, is an expression that doth not only denote *Prayer*, but *intense* and *fervent* Prayer. To *cry*, is to Pray in an Holy Passion; and such are usually speeding Prayers, *Psalm* 18. 6. and *Heb.* 5. 7.

2. The Encouragements to this Resolution, and these are Twofold.

1. Objective, taken from the Soveraignty of God.

Subjective, taken from the Experience he had of his *Providence*.

1. The

1. The Soveraignty of God, *I will cry unto God most High.* Upon this he acts his faith in Extremity of danger. *Saul* is high, but God the most high; and without his Permission, he is assured *Saul* cannot touch him. He had none to help; and if he had, he knew God must first help the helpers, or they cannot help him. He had no means of Defence or escape before him, but the Most High is not limited by means. This is a singular Prop to Faith, *Psalm* 59. 9.

2. The Experience of his *Providence* hitherto: *Unto God that performeth all Things for me.*

The word which we translate [*performeth*] comes from a root, that signifies both to *perfect*, and to *desist* or *cease*. For when a business is performed and perfected, the Agent then ceases and desists from working: He puts to the last hand, when he finishes the work. To such an happy Issue the Lord hath brought all his doubtful and difficult Matters before; and this gives him encouragement, that he will still be gracious, and perfect that which concerneth him now, as he speaks, Psal. 138. 8. *The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.*

גָּמַר
perfecit, defecit, desiit, Pagnin. Buxtorf.

The *Septuagint* renders it by τὸν εὐεργετήσοντά με who *profiteth*, or *benefiteth* me. And it is a certain Truth, that all the results and issues of Providence are profitable and beneficial to the Saints. But the Supplement in our Translation well receives the importance of the place, *Who performeth all things.* And it involves the most strict and proper notion of *Providence*, which is nothing else but the performance of God's gracious purposes, and promises to his People. And therefore *Vatablus* and *Muis* supply and fill up the room which the conciseness of the Original leaves, with *quæ promisit*, I will cry unto God most High, unto God that performeth

the Things which he hath promiſed. Payment is the performance of Promiſes. Grace makes the Promiſe, and Providence the payment.

Piſcator fills it with *benignitatem & miſericordiam ſuam*, unto God that performeth *his Kindneſs and Mercy.* But ſtill it ſuppoſes the Mercy performed, to be contained in the Promiſe. Mercy is ſweet in the Promiſe, and much more ſo in the *Providential Performance* of it to us.

Caſtalio's Supplement comes nearer to ours, *rerum mearum Tranſactorem*, I will cry unto God moſt high, unto God *the Tranſactor of my Affairs.*

But our *Engliſh*, making out the ſenſe by an univerſal particle, is moſt fully agreeable to the ſcope of the Text. For it cannot but be a great encouragement to his Faith, that God had tranſacted *all things*, or performed *all things* for him; this *Providence* that never failed him in any of the ſtraits that ever he met with (and his Life was a Life of many ſtraits) he might well hope it would not now fail him, though this were an extraordinary and matchleſs one.

Bring we then our thoughts a little cloſer to this Scripture, and it will give us a fair and lovely proſpect of *Providence.*

In its 1. *Univerſal.* 2. *Effectual.* 3. *Beneficial.* 4. *Encouraging* Influence upon the Affairs and Concerns of the Saints.

1. The expreſſion imports the *Univerſal* Intereſt and Influence of *Providence* in and upon all the Concerns and Intereſts of the Saints. It hath not only its hand in this or that, but *in all* that concerns them. It hath its Eye upon every thing that relates to them throughout their Lives, from firſt to laſt. Not only great, and more important

bu

but the most minute and ordinary affairs of our Lives are transacted and managed by it. It touches all things that touch us, whether more nearly or remotely.

2. It displaies the *Efficacy* of *Providential Influences*. *Providence* doth not only undertake, but [performeth] and perfects what concerns us. It goes through with its designs, and accomplisheth what it begins. No difficulty so clogs it, no cross accident falls in its way, but it carries its design through it. Its motions are irresistible and uncontrolable, he *performs* it for us.

3. And (which is sweet to consider) all its products and issues are exceeding *beneficial* to the Saints. It performs all things [for them]. 'Tis true, we often prejudge its works, and unjustly censure its designs, and under many of our straits and troubles we say, *all these things are against us*: But indeed *Providence* neither doth, nor can do any thing that is really against the true Interest and good of the Saints. For what are the Works of *Providence*, but the Execution of God's Decree, and the fulfilling of his Word? And there can be no more in Providence, than is in them. Now there is nothing but *good* to the *Saints* in God's *Purposes* and *Promises*; and therefore, whatever *Providence* doth in their Concernments, it must be (as the Text speaks) *the performance of all things for them*.

4. And if so, how chearing, *supporting*, *and encouraging* must the Consideration of these things be in a day of distress and trouble? What Life and Hope will it inspire our Hearts and Prayers withal, when great pressures lie upon us? It had such a chearing influence upon the *Psalmist* at this time, when the state of his affairs was to the eye of sense and reason forlorn, and desperate: There was now but an

hairs breadth (as we say) betwixt him and ruine.

A potent, enraged, and implacable Enemy had driven him into the hole of a Rock, and was come after him into that hole, yet now whilst *his Soul is among Lyons*, whilest he lies in a cranny of the *Rock*, expecting every moment to be drawn out to death, the Reflections he had upon the gracious Performances of the Most High for him, from the beginning to that moment, support his Soul, and inspire hope and Life into his Prayers, *I will cry unto God most high, unto God that performeth all things for me.*

The amount of all you have in this Doctrinal Conclusion..

Doct. *That it is the Duty of the Saints, especially in Times of straits, to reflect upon the Performances of Providences for them in all the States, and through all the Stages of their Lives.*

The Church in all the works of Mercy, owns the *hand of God*, Isa. 26. 12. *Lord, thou hast wrought all our Works in* (or for) *us.* And still it hath been the Pious, and constant Practice of the Saints in all Generations, to preserve the memory of the more famous, and remarkable *Providences* that have befallen them in their Times, as a precious Treasure. *If thou be a Christian indeed, I know thou hast, if not in thy Book, yet certainly in thy Heart a great many precious Favours upon Record; the very remembrance and rehearsal of them is sweeet: How much more sweet was the actual enjoyment?* Baxter's Saints Rest, p. 768. Thus *Moses* by Divine Direction wrote a memorial of that Victory obtained over *Amalek* as the fruit and return of Prayer, and built there an *Altar* with this Inscription *Jehovah Nissi, The Lord my Banner*, Exod. 17. 14, 15. Thus *Mordecai* and *Hester* took

all

all care to perpetuate the memory of that signal deliverance from the Plot of *Haman*, by ordaining the Feast of *Purim*, as an *Anniversary throughout every Generation, every Family, every Province, and every City, that those days of Purim should not fail from among the Jews, nor the memorial of them perish from their Seed*, Esth. 9. 28. For this end you find *Psalms* indited, to bring to remembrance, *Psal.* 70. the Title. Parents giving suitable Names to their Children, that every time they looked upon them, they might refresh the memory of Gods Mercies, 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. The very places where eminent Providences have appeared, new named, upon no other design, but to perpetuate the memorial of those sweet Providences which so refreshed them there: Thence *Bethel* took its name, *Gen.* 28. 19. And that Well of Water where *Hagar* was seasonably refreshed by the Angel in her distress, *Beer-la-hai-roi*, the well of him that liveth and looketh on me, *Gen.* 16. 14. Yea, the Saints have given, and God hath assumed to himself new Titles upon this very score and account; *Abraham*'s *Jehovah jireh*, and *Gideon*'s *Jehovah shallum* were ascribed to him upon this reason. And sometimes you find the Lord stiles himself, The God that brought *Abraham* from *Ur* of the *Chaldees*: Then the Lord, God that brought them out of *Egypt*: Then the Lord that gathered them out of the North Country: Still minding them of the gracious Providences which in all those places he had wrought for them.

Now there is a twofold Reflection upon the *Providential Works of God.*

1. One entire and full, in the whole Complex and perfect frame thereof. This blessed sight is reserved for the perfect state. It is in that Mount of God, where we shall see both the *Wilderness* and

Ca-

When the Records of Eternity shall be expos'd to view, all the counsels and results of that profound wisdom look'd into; how will it transport? when it shall be discerned,

Canaan: The glorious Kingdom into which we are come, and the way through which we were led into it. There the Saints shall have a ravishing view of that beautiful frame, and every part shall be distinctly discerned, as it had its particular use, and as it was connected with the other parts, and how effectually and orderly they all wrought to bring about that blessed design of their Salvation, according to the Promise, *Rom.* 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God,* &c. For it is certain, no Ship at Sea keeps more exactly by the Compass which directs its course, than *Providence* doth by that *Promise*, which is its *Cynosura* and *Pole-star.*

Lo, thus were the designs laid: Here were the apt junctures and admirable dependencies of things, which when acted upon the stage of Time, seem'd so perplext and intricate, *Howes Blessedness*, p. 76.

2. The other partial and imperfect in the way to Glory, where we only view it in its single Acts, or at most, in some branches and more observable course of Actions.

Betwixt these two is the same difference, as betwixt the sight of the dis-jointed wheels and scattered pins of a Watch, and the sight of the whole united in one frame, and working in one orderly Motion: Or, betwixt an ignorant Spectators viewing some more observable vessel or joint of a dissected Body; and the accurate *Anatomist*'s discerning the course of all the veins and arteries of the Body, as he follows the several branches of them through the whole, and plainly sees the proper places, figure, and use of each, with their mutual respect to one another.

O how ravishing and delectable a sight is that! to behold at one view the whole design of Providence,

dence, and the proper Place, and use of every single act, which we could not understand in this World: For what Christ said to *Peter*, *John* 13. 7. is as applicable to some Providences in which we are now concerned, as it was to that particular action; *What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know it.* All the dark intricate puzling Providences at which we were sometimes so stumbled, and sometimes amazed, which we could neither reconcile with the Promise, nor with each other; nay, which we so unjustly censured and bitterly bewailed, as if they had fallen out quite cross to our happiness: We shall then see to be unto us, as the difficult Passage through the Wilderness was unto *Israel*, *The right way to a City of Habitation*, Psalm 107. 7.

And yet tho' our present Views and Reflections upon Providence be so short and imperfect in comparison of that in Heaven, yet such as it is under all its present disadvantages, it hath so much excellency and sweetness in it, that I may call it a little Heaven, or as *Jacob* called his *Bethel*, *the Gate of Heaven*. 'Tis certainly an high-way of walking with God in this World, and as sweet Communion may a Soul enjoy with him in his *Providences*, as in any of his *Ordinances*. How often have the Hearts of its observers been melted into Tears of Joy, at the beholding of its wise and unexpected Productions! How often hath it convinced them, upon a sober Recollection of the Events of their Lives, that if the Lord had left them to their own Counsels, they had as often been their own Tormentors, if not Executioners? Into what, and how many fatal mischiefs had they precipitated themselves, if Providence had been as short sighted as they? They have given it their hearty thanks, for consi-

Luther was bold to prescribe to God, but at last said, *Risit haud dubiè hanc sapientiam Dominus, & dixit, Deus sum, non* consi-*quax.*

conſidering their *Intereſt* more than their *Importunity*, and not ſuffering them to periſh by their own deſires.

The Benefits of adverting the Works of Providence, are manifold and unſpeakable; as in its place we ſhall ſhew you. But not to entangle the thread of the Diſcourſe, I ſhall caſt it into this Method.

Firſt, I ſhall prove, that the Concernments of the Saints in this World, are certainly conducted by the Wiſdom and care of ſpecial Providence.

Secondly, I will ſhew you, in what particular Concernments of theirs this Providential Care is evidenty diſcovered.

Thirdly, That it is the Duty of Saints to advert, and heedfully obſerve theſe Performances of Providence for them in all their Concernments.

Fourthly, In what manner this Duty is to be performed by them.

Fifthly, What ſingular Benefits reſult to them from ſuch Obſervations.

And then apply the whole in ſuch Uſes, as offer themſelves from the Point.

The firſt General Head.

Firſt, I ſhall undertake the Proof and Defence of this great Truth, *That the Affairs of the Saints in this World are certainly conducted by the Wiſdom and Care of ſpecial Providence.*

And herein I addreſs my ſelf with chearfulneſs, to perform (as I am able) a ſervice for that Providence, which hath throughout my Life performed all things for me, as the Text ſpeaks.

There is a twofold Conſideration of Providence according to its twofold Object, and Manner of Diſpen-

Dispensation; the one is *general*, exercised about all Creatures, rational and irrational, animate and inanimate; the other *special* and peculiar. Christ hath an universal Empire over all things, *Ephes.* 1. 22. The Head of the whole World, by way of *Dominion*; but an Head to the Church, by way of *union* and *special influence*, Joh. 17. 2. *The Saviour of all Men, but especially of them that believe*, 1 Tim. 4. 10. The Church is his *special* care and charge; he rules the World for its good, as an Head consulting the welfare of the Body.

Heathens generally denied Providence, and no wonder, since they denied a God: For the same Arguments that prove one, will prove the other. *Aristotle* the Prince of *Heathen Philosophers*, could not by the utmost search of Reason, find out the Worlds Original, and therefore concludes, it was from Eternity. The *Epicureans* did in a sort acknowledge a God, but yet denied a Providence, and wholly excluded him from any Interest or Concern in the Affairs of the World, as being inconsistent with the Felicity and Tranquility of the Divine Being to be diverted and cumbered with the Care and labour of Government. This Assertion is so repugnant to Reason, that it is a wonder themselves blusht not at its absurdity; but I guess at the design, and one of them speaks it out in broad Language. *Itaque imposuistis cervicibus nostris sempiternum dominum, quem dies & noctes timeremus. Quis enim non timeat omnia providentem, & cogitantem, & animadvertentem, & omnia ad se pertinere putantem, curiosum & plenum negotii Deum? Vell. apud Cicer. de Natura Deorum.* They foresaw, that the Concession of a Providence, would impose an Eternal Yoak upon their Necks, by making them accountable for all they did to an higher Tribunal: And

that

that they must necessarily pass the time of their sojourning here in fear, whilst all their *Thoughts*, *Words* and *Ways* were strictly Noted and Recorded, in order to an account by an All-seeing and righteous God: And therefore laboured to perswade themselves that was not, which they had no mind should be. But these Atheistical and foolish Conceits fall flat before the undeniable Evidence of this so great and clear a Truth. Now,

My Business here, is not so much to deal with professed *Atheists*, who deny the Existence of God; and consequently deride all Evidences brought from Scripture, of the extraordinary Events, that fall out in favour of that People that are called His: But rather to convince those, that professedly own all this; yet never having tasted Religion by Experience, suspect at least, that all these things which we call *special Providences* to the Saints, are but *natural Events*, or meer *contingencies*: And thus whilst they profess to own a God, and a Providence, (which Profession is but the effect of their Education) they do in the mean Time live like *Atheists*; and both think and act, as if there were no such things: And really I doubt, this is the Case of the far greatest part of the Men of this Generation.

But if it were indeed so, that the Affairs of the World in general, and more especially those of the Saints, were not conducted by Divine Providence, but (as they would perswade us) by the steady course of natural Causes: Beside which, if at any Time we observe any event to fall out, it's meerly casual and contingent, or that which proceeds from some hidden and secret cause in Nature: If this indeed were so, let them that are tempted to believe it, rationally satisfie the following demands. *First*,

First Demand.

How comes it to pass, that so many signal Mercies and Deliverances have befallen the People of God, above the Power, and against the Course of natural Causes: To make way for which, there hath been a sensible suspension and stop put to the course of Nature? It is most evident, that no natural Effect can exceed the Power of its natural Cause. Nothing can give to another, more than it hath in it self: And it is as clear, that whatsoever acts naturally, acts necessarily: Fire burns *ad ultimum sui posse* to the uttermost of its Power: Waters overflow, and drown all that they can. Lions and other rapacious and cruel Beasts, especially when hungry, Tear and Devour their Prey: And for *Arbitrary* and rational Agents, they also act according to the Principles and Laws of their Natures. A wicked Man when his Heart is fully set in him, and his will stands in a full bent of Resolution, will certainly (if he have Power in his Hand, and opportunity to execute his conceived Mischief) give it vent, and perpetrate the wicked Devices of his Heart: For having once conceived Mischief, and *travailing in Pain with it* (according to the Course of Nature) he must *bring it forth*, as it is *Psalm* 7. 14. But if any of these inanimate, brutal, or rational agents, when there is no natural obstacle or *remora*, have their Power suspended, and that when the effect is near the birth, and the design at the very article of Execution, so that though they would, yet cannot hurt; to what think you is this to be assigned and referred? Yet so it hath often been seen, where Gods interest hath been immediately concerned in the danger and evil of the Event. The Sea divided it self in its own Channel, and made

made a wall of Water, on each ſide, to give Gods diſtreſſed *Iſrael* a ſafe paſſage, and that not in a calm, but when the Waves thereof roared; * as it is *Iſa.* 51. 15. The Fire when blown up to the moſt intenſe and vehement flame, had no Power to ſinge one hair of Gods faithful Witneſſes, when at the ſame inſtant it had Power to deſtroy their intended *Executioners* at a greater diſtance, *Dan.* 3. 22. Yea, we find it hath ſome time been ſufficient to conſume, but not to torment the Body; as in that known inſtance of bleſſed *Bayneham*, who told his Enemies, the flames were to him as a Bed of Roſes. The hungry Lions put off their natural fierceneſs, and became gentle and harmleſs, when *Daniel* was caſt among them for a prey. The like account the Church Story gives us of *Polycarpe*, and *Dionyſius Areopagita*, whom the Fire would not touch, but ſtood after the manner of a Ship-man's Sail filled with the Wind about them.

* How hard was *Porphyry* put to it, when inſtead of a better, this pretence muſt ſerve the turn. That *Moſes* taking theadvantage of a low Waunknown to the *Egyptians*, paſſed over the People thereat: As if *Moſes* a ſtranger, were better acquainted there, than the *Egyptian* Natives. *Acts* and *Mon. Vol.* 1. p. 55.

Are theſe things according to the Courſe and Law of Nature? To what ſecret natural cauſe can they be aſcribed? In like manner, we find the vileſt, and fierceſt of wicked Men, have been withheld by an inviſible hand of reſtraint from injuring the Lords People. By what ſecret cauſe in nature, was *Jeroboam*'s hand dried up, and made inflexible at the ſame inſtant it was ſtretched out againſt the Man of God? 1 *Kings* 13. 4. No wild Beaſts rend and devour their Prey more greedily, than Wicked Men would deſtroy the People of God that dwell among them, were it not for this Providential reſtraint upon them. So the *Pſalmiſt* expreſſes his caſe

case in the words following my Text, *My Soul is among Lyons, and I lye among them that are set on fire.* The *Disciples* were sent forth as Sheep into the midst of *Wolves*, *Mat*, 10. 16. It will not avail in this case to object, Those miraculous events depend only upon Scripture testimony, which the *Atheist* is not concluded by: for beside all that may be alledged for the Authority of that testimony (which is needless to produce to men that own it) what is it less that every eye sees, or may see at this day? Do we not behold a weak defenceless handful of men, wonderfully, and (except this way) unaccountably preserved from ruine in the midst of potent, enraged and turbulent enemies, that fain would, but cannot destroy them; when as yet, no natural impediment can be assigned why they cannot?

And if this pose us, what shall we say, when we see events produced in the world for the good of Gods chosen, by those very hands and means, which were intentionally imployed for their ruine? These things are as much beside the intentions of their enemies, as they are above their own expectations; yet such things are no rarities in the world. Was not the Envy of *Joseph*'s brethren, the cursed Plot of *Haman*, the Decree procured by the envy of the *Princes* against *Daniel*, with many more of the like nature, all turned by a secret and strange hand of providence, to their greater advancement and benefit: their Enemies lifted them up to all that honour and preferment they had.

Second Demand.

How is it (if the Saints Concerns are not ordered by a special divine Providence) *that natural causes*

unite and associate themselves for their relief and benefit in so strange a manner as they are found to do? It is undeniably evident, that there are marvellous coincidencies of Providence, confederating and agreeing as it were, to meet and unite themselves to bring about the good of Gods Chosen. There is a like face of things shewing it self in divers places at that time, when any work for the good of the Church is come upon the stage of the world. As when the *Messiah* the capital mercy came to the *Temple*, then *Simeon* and *Anna* were brought thither by Providence, as witnesses to it. So in Reformation work, when the Images were pulled down in *Holland*, one and the same spirit of zeal possessed them in every *City* and *Town*, that the work was done in a night. He that heedfully reads the *History* of *Joseph*'s advancement to be the Lord of *Egypt*, may number in that story twelve remarkable acts or steps of Providence, by which he ascended to that honour and authority: if but one of them had failed, in all likelihood the Event had done so too: but every one fell in its order, exactly keeping its own time and place. So in the Churches deliverance from the plot of *Haman*, we find no less than seven acts of Providence concurring strangely to produce it, as if they had all met by appointment and consent, to break that snare for them: one thing so aptly suiting with, and making way for another, that every heedful observer must needs conclude, this cannot be the effect of *casuality*, but wise *councel*. Even as in viewing the accurate structure of the body of a man, the figure, position, and mutual respects of the several members and vessels, hath convinced some, (and is sufficient to convince all) that it was the effect of divine

vine Wisdom and Power: in like manner, if the admirable adaptation of the means and instruments employed for mercy to the People of God be heedfully considered, who can but confess, that as there are tools of all sorts and sizes in the shop of Providence: so there is a most skilful hand that uses them, and that they could no more produce such effects of themselves, than the Ax, Saw, or Chisell can cut or carve a rude logg into a beautiful figure, without the hand of a skilful Artificer.

We find by manifold instances, that there certainly are strong combinations, and predispositions of persons and things, to bring about some issue and design for the benefit of the Church, which themselves never thought of: they had no intelligence, communicate not their counsels to each other, yet meet together, and work together as if they did: which is, as if ten men should all meet together at one place, and in one hour, about one and the same business, and that without any fore-appointment betwixt themselves; can any question, but such a meeting of means and Instruments is certainly, though secretly over-ruled by some Wise invisible Agent?

Third Demand.

If the Concerns of Gods people be not governed by special Providence, *Whence is it, that the most apt and powerful means imployed to destroy them are rendered ineffectual, and weak contemptible means imployed for their defence and comfort, crowned with success?* This could never be, if things were wholly swayed by the course of nature. If we judge by that rule, we must con-

clude, the more apt and powerfull the means are, the more ſucceſsful and proſperous they muſt needs be; and where they are inept, weak and contemptible, nothing can be expected from them: thus reaſon layes it according to the rules of nature? but Providence croſſes its hands, as *Jacob* did in bleſſing the Sons of *Joſeph*, and orders quite contrary iſſues and events. Such was the mighty power and deep policy uſed by *Pharaoh* to deſtroy Gods *Iſrael*, that to the eye of reaſon, it was as impoſſible to ſurvive it, as for crackling thorns to abide unconſumed amidſt devouring flames; by which Emblem, their miraculous preſervation is expreſſed, *Exod.* 3. 2. the buſh was all in a flame, but no conſumption of it. The Heathen *Roman* Emperours, who made the World tremble, and ſubdued the Nations under them, have employed all their power and policy againſt the poor, naked, defenceleſs Church, to ruine it; yet could not accompliſh it, *Rev.* 12. 3. 4. O the Seas of blood that *Heathen Rome* ſhed in the ten perſecutions! yet the Church lives, and when the Dragon gave his power to the Beaſt, *Rev.* 13. 2. (*i. e.*) the State of *Rome* became Anti-Chriſtian, O what ſlaughters have been made by the Beaſt in all his dominions; ſo that the Holy Ghoſt repreſents him, as drunken with the blood of the Saints, *Rev.* 17. 6. And yet all will not do: the gates (*i. e.*) the powers and policies of Hell cannot prevail againſt it. How manifeſt is the care and power of Providence herein? Had half that power been imployed againſt any other people, it had certainly ſwallowed them up immediately, or in the hundredth part of the time worn them out. How ſoon was the *Perſian* Monarchy ſwallowed up by the *Grecian*, and that again by the *Roman*?

Acts and Mon. Vol. 3. *p.* 974.

Roman? Diocleſian and *Maximin* in the height of their perſecution found themſelves ſo baffled by Providence, that they both reſigned the government, and lived as private men. But in this wonderful preſervation God makes good that promiſe, Jer. 30. 11. *though I make a full end of all Nations, yet will I not make a full end of Thee*: and that in Iſa. 54. 17. *no weapon formed againſt thee ſhall proſper.*

On the contrary, how ſucceſsful have weak and contemptible means been made for the good of the Church? Thus in the firſt planting of Chriſtianity in the world, by what weak and improbable inſtruments was it done? Chriſt did not chuſe the eloquent *Orators*, or men of Authority in the Courts of *Kings* and *Emperours*, but twelve poor *Mechanicks*, and Fiſher-men; and theſe not ſent together in a troop, but ſome to take one Countrey to conquer it, and ſome another: the moſt ridiculous courſe (in appearance) for ſuch a deſign as could be imagined; and yet in how ſhort a time was the Goſpel ſpread, and the Churches planted by them in the ſeveral Kingdoms of the world? This the *Pſalmiſt* foreſaw by the Spirit of Prophecy, when he ſaid, *Out of the mouth of Babes and Sucklings haſt thou ordained ſtrength, to ſtill the Enemy, and the Avenger*, Pſal. 8. 2. At the ſound of Rams horns *Jericho* is delivered into the hands of *Iſrael*: ſee *Joſh* 6. 20. By three hundred men with their Pitchers and Lamps, the huge hoſt of *Midian* is diſcomfited, *Judges* 6. 19. The *Proteſtants* beſieged in *Beziers* in *France* are delivered by a drunken *Drummer*, who going to his Quarters at midnight, rang the Alarm-Bell of the Town, not knowing what he did; and juſt then were their enemies making

their aſſault. And as weak and improbable means have been bleſſed with ſucceſs to the Church in general, ſo to the preſervation of its particular members alſo. A Spider by weaving her web over the mouth of an Oven ſhall hide a ſervant of Chriſt, *Du Moulin* from his Enemies, who took refuge there in that Bloody *Pariſian* Maſſacre. A *Hen* ſhall ſuſtain another many dayes at the ſame time, by lodging her egg every day, in the place where he had hid himſelf from the Cut-throats. Examples might be eaſily multiplied in the caſe; but the truth is too plain and obvious to the obſervation of all ages to need them. And can we but acknowledge a divine and ſpecial Providence over-ruling theſe matters, when we ſee the moſt apt and potent means for the Churches ruine fruſtrated, and the moſt ſilly and contemptible means ſucceeded and proſpered for its good?

Fourth Demand.

If all things be governed by the courſe of nature, and force of natural cauſes, *How then comes it to paſs, that men are turned (like a bowle by a rub) out of the way of evil, unto which they were driving on with full ſpeed?* Good men have been engaged in the way to their own ruine, and knew it not; but Providence hath met them in the way and preſerved them by ſtrange diverſions, the meaning of which they underſtood not, till the Event diſcovered it. *Paul* lay bound at *Cæſarea*, the *High Prieſt* and chief of the *Jews* requeſt *Feſtus*, that he might be brought bound to *Jeruſalem*, having laid wait in the way to kill him: but *Feſtus* (though ingnorant of the plot) utterly refuſes it, but chuſes rather to go with them to *Cæſa-*

Cæsarea, and judge him there: by this rub, their bloody design is frustrated, *Acts* 25. 3, 4.

Possidonius in the life the *Augustine*, tells us, that the good Father going to teach the people of a certain Town, took a Guide with him, to shew him the way; the guide mistook the usual road, and ignorantly fell into a by-path, by which means he escaped ruine by the hands of the bloody *Donatists*, who knowing his intention, way-laid him to kill him in the road. *Possid. in vit. Aug. cap.* 15.

And as memorable and wonderful are those rubs and diversions wicked men have met with in the way of perpetrating the evils conceived and intended in their own hearts. *Laban* and *Esau* came against *Jacob* with mischievous purposes; but no sooner are they come nigh him, but the shackles of restraint are immediately clapt upon them both, so that their hands cannot perform their enterprizes. *Balaam* runs greedily for reward to curse *Israel*; but meets with an unexpected check at his very out-set, and though that stopt him not, but he essay'd every way to do them mischief, yet he still finds himself fetter'd by an effectual bond of restraint, that he can no way shake off, *Numb.* 22. 25, 38. *Saul* the High-Priest's Blood-hound, breaths out threatnings against the Church, and goes with a bloody commission towards *Damascus*, to hale the poor flock of Christ to the slaughter; but when he comes nigh the place, he meets an unexpected stop in the way, by which the mischief is not only diverted, but himself converted to Christ, *Acts.* 9. 1, 2, 3, 4. Who can but see the finger of God in these things? Gen. 31. 24.

Fifth Demand.

If there be not an over-ruling Providence ordering all things for the good of Gods People, *How comes it to paſs, that the good and evil which is done to them in this World, is accordingly repaid into the Boſoms of them that are inſtrumental therein?*

1. How clear is it to every Mans Obſervation, that the Kindneſſes and Benefits any have done to the Lords People, have been rewarded with full Meaſure into their Boſoms? The *Egyptian Midwives* refuſed to obey *Pharaoh*'s inhumane command, and ſaved the Male Children of *Iſrael*: For this the Lord dealt well with them, and built them Houſes, *Exod.* 1. 21. The *Shunamite* was hoſpitable, and careful for *Eliſha*, and God recompenced it with the deſirable enjoyment of a Son, 2 *Kings* 4. 9, 17. *Rahab* hid the Spies, and was exempted from the common Deſtruction for it, *Heb.* 11. 31. *Publius* the chief Man of the Iſland *Melita*, courteouſly received and lodged *Paul* after his Shipwrack: The Lord ſpeedily repaid him for that Kindneſs, and healed his Father, who lay ſick at that Time of a Bloody Flux and Feaver, *Acts* 28. 7, 8. ———

Si ab exordio mundi, ad noſtram uſque memoriam percurramus hiſtorias, inſignia divinæ ultionis in peccatores occurrent indicia. Alſtedii Nat. Theol. p. 196.

In like manner, we find the evils done to Gods People have been repaid, by a juſt Retribution to their Enemies.

Pharaoh and the *Egyptians* were cruel Enemies to Gods *Iſrael*, and deſigned the ruine of their Poor Innocent Babes; and God repaid it, in ſmiting all the firſt-born of *Egypt* in one Night, *Exod.* 12. 19.

Haman

Haman erected a *Gallows* fifty Cubits high for good *Mordecai*, and God so ordered it, that himself and his ten Sons were hanged on it. And indeed it was but meet, that he should eat the fruit of that tree which himself had planted, *Esther* 7. 10.

Ahitophel plots against *David*, and gives councel like an *Oracle*, how to procure his fall; and that very counsel, like a surcharged Gun, recoils upon himself, and procures his ruine: for seeing his good councel rejected, (good politically, not morally,) it was now easie for him to guess at the issue, and so at his own fate, 2 *Sam.* 17. 23.

Charles the *Ninth* most inhumanely made the very Canals of *Paris* to stream with Protestant blood, and soon after he died miserably, his blood streaming from all parts of his body.

Stephen Gardiner, that burnt so many of Gods dear servants to ashes, was himself so scorched up by a terrible inflammation, that his very tongue was black and hung out of his mouth, and in dreadful torments ended his wretched dayes.

Maximinus that cruel *Emperour*, who set forth his *Proclamation* engraven in Brass, for the utter abolishing of the Christian Religion, was speedily smitten like *Herod*, with a dreadful judgement, swarms of Lice preying upon his Entrails, and causing such a stench, that his *Physicians* could not endure to come nigh him, and for refusing it were slain. Hundreds of like Instances might easily be produced, to confirm this Observation. And who can but see by these things, that *verily there is a God that judgeth in the Earth?*

Yea, so exact have been the *retributions* of Providence to the Enemies of the Church, that not only

only the same persons, but the same members that have been the *instruments* of *mischief*, have been made the *subjects* of *wrath*.

The same *Arm* which *Jeroboam* stretched out to smite the Prophet, God smites. The *Emperour Aurelian* when he was ready to subscribe the *Edict* for the persecution of the *Christians*, was suddenly crampt in his *Knuckles*, that he could not write.

Euseb. l. 7. cap. 29.

Mr. *Greenhill* in his exposition upon *Ezek.* 11. 13. tells his Auditory, that there was one then present in the Congregation, who was an eye-witness of a Woman scoffing at another for purity and holy walking, who had her tongue stricken immediately with the Palsie, and died thereof within two days.

Henry the Second of *France* in a great rage against a *Protestant Counsellor*, committed him to the hands of one of his Nobles to be imprisoned, and that with these words, that *he would see him burned with his own eyes*: but mark the righteous Providence of God, within a few dayes after, the same Noble man, with a Lance put into his hands by the *King*, did at a *Tilting match* run the said King into one of his eyes, whereof he dyed.

Yea, Providence hath made the very place of sinning, the place of punishment, 1 King. 21. 19. *In the place where Dogs licked the blood of* Naboth, *shall Dogs lick thy blood*: and it was exactly fulfilled, 2 *Kings* 9. 26. Thus *Tophet* is made a burying place for the Jews, till there was no room to bury; and that was the place where they had offered up their Sons to *Moloch*, *Jer.* 7. 31, 32. The Story of *Nightingale* is generally known which Mr. *Fox* relates, how he fell out of the Pulpit and brake his neck, whilst he was abusing that Scripture, 1 *John* 1. 10. And

And thus the Scriptures are made good by Providence, whoso diggeth a pit shall fall therein, and he that rolleth a stone, it shall return upon him, *Prov.* 26. 27. and *Matth.* 7. 2. with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again.

If any shall yet say, *These things may fall out casually; That many thousands of the Churches Enemies have dyed in peace, and their end been like other men.* *Object.*

We answer with *Augustine*, If no sin were punished here, no Providence would be believed; and if every sin should be punished here, no Judgement would be expected. But, that none may think these Events to be meerly casual and accidental, we yet further demand. *Sol.*

Sixth Demand.

If these things be meerly casual, *How is it that they square and agree so exactly with the Scriptures in all particulars?*

We read, Amos 3. 3. *Can two walk together except they be agreed?* If two men travel in one road, it's like they are agreed to go to the same place. Providences and Scriptures go all one way: and if they seem at any time to go diverse or contrary ways; be sure, they will meet at the journeys end. There is an agreement betwixt them so to do.

Doth God miraculously suspend the power of natural Causes, as in the *first demand* was opened? Why, this is no accidental thing, but what harmonizeth with the word, Isa. 43. 2. *When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee, and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee. When thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the flame kindle upon thee.*

Do

Do natural Cauſes unite and aſſociate themſelves for the good of Gods people? Why, this is no more than what is contained in the Promiſes, and is but the fulfilling of that Scripture 1 Cor. 3. 22. *All is yours, for ye are Chriſts* (*i.e.*) the uſe, benefit and ſervice of all the Creatures is for you, as your need ſhall require.

Are the moſt apt and powerful means employed for their ruine fruſtrated? Who can but ſee the Scriptures fulfilled in, and expounded by ſuch Providences? See *Iſa.* 45. 15, 16, 17. and 8. 8, 9, 10. expound by 2 *Kings* 18. 17 *& ſeq.*

See you at any time a rub of Providence diverting the courſe of good men from falling into evil, or wicked men from committing evil; how loudly do ſuch Providences proclaim the truth and certainty of the Scriptures, which tell us, *That the way of man is not in himſelf, neither is it in him that walks to direct his ſteps*, Jer. 10. 23. and that in Prov. 16. 9. *A mans heart deviſeth his way but the Lord directeth his ſteps.*

Do you ſee adequate retributions made to thoſe that injure or befriend the people of God? Why, when you ſee all the kindneſs and love they have ſhown the Saints returned with an Overplus into their boſoms? how is it poſſible, but you muſt ſee the accompliſhment of theſe Scriptures in ſuch Providences? Iſa. 32. 8. 2 Cor. 9. 6. *The liberal ſoul deviſeth liberal things, and by liberal things he ſhall ſtand.*

And when you ſee the evils men have done, or intended to do to the Lords people, recoiling upon themſelves; he is perfectly blind, that ſees not the harmony ſuch Providences bear with theſe Scriptures, *Pſal.* 140. 11, 12. *Pſal.* 7. 14, 15, 16. *Pſal.* 9. 16.

O

O what exact proportions do Providences and Scriptures hold! little do Men take notice of it. Why did *Cyrus* contrary to all rules of State Policy freely dismiss the Captives, but to fulfil that Scripture, *Isa.* 45. 13. So that it was well observed by One, That as God hath stretcht out the *Expansum* or Firmament over the natural; so he hath stretcht out his Word over the rational World. And as the Creatures on Earth are influenced by those Heavenly Bodies, so are all Creatures in the World influenced by the Word, and do infallibly fulfil it, when they design to cross it.

Seventh Demand.

If these Things be Contingent, *How is it that they fall out in such remarkable nicks and junctures of time, which makes them so greatly observable to all that consider them.*

We find a multitude of Providences so timed to a Minute, that had they fallen out never so little sooner or later, they had signified but little what now they do. Certainly, it cannot be casualy, but counsel, that so exactly nicks the opportunity. Contingencies keep to no Rules.

Contingentia rerum æstimanda est è causis proximis, secundis, & particularibus, non è causa prima, & universali, respectu cujus nihil comingens est, sed omnia necessaria, necessitate immutabilitatis non causæ. Wendelin. Theol. p. 13.

How remarkable to this Purpose, was the tidings brought to *Saul*, that the *Philistines* had invaded the Land? 1 *Sam.* 23. 27. just as he was ready to grasp the Prey. The Angel calls to *Abraham*, and shews him another Sacrifice, just when his hand was giving the fatal stroke to *Isaac*,

Gen.

Gen. 22. 10, 11. A Well of Water is diſcovere to *Hagar*, juſt when ſhe had left the Child, as n able to ſee its Death, *Gen.* 21. 16, 19. *Rabſhak* meets with a blaſting Providence, hears a Ru mour that fruſtrated his Deſign, juſt when read to give the ſhock againſt *Jeruſalem*, *Iſa.* 27. 7, So when *Haman*'s Plot againſt the *Jews* was ripe and all things ready for Execution; *On that Nigh could not the King ſleep*, Eſth. 6. 1. When th horns are ready to gore *Judah*, immediately *Car penters* are prepared to fray them away, *Zech.* 18, 19, 20, 21. How remarkable was the Relie of *Rochel* by a *Shoal* of *Fiſh* that came into th *Harbour*, when they were ready to periſh wit Famine, ſuch as they never obſerved before, no after that Time. Mr. *Dod* could not go to Bed one Night, but hath a ſtrong impulſe to Viſit (though unſeaſonably) a Neighbour Gentleman and juſt as he came, he meets him at his Door with an Halter in his Pocket, juſt going to hang himſelf. Dr. *Tate* and his Wife in the *Iriſh Rebellion*, flying through the Woods with a Sucking Child, which was juſt ready to expire; the Mother going to reſt it upon a Rock, puts her hand upon a bottle of warm Milk, by which it was preſerved. A good Woman (from whoſe Mouth I received it) being driven to a great Extremity, all ſupplies failing, was exceedingly plunged into unbelieving Doubts and Fears, not ſeeing whence ſupplies ſhould come; when lo! in the nick of Time, turning ſome things in a Cheſt, unexpectedly lights upon a Piece of Gold, which ſupplied her preſent wants, till God opened another Door of ſupply. If theſe things fall out caſually, how is it, they obſerve the very nick of Time ſo exactly? As that it is become Proverbial

bial in Scripture, *Gen.* 22. 14. *In the Mount of the Lord it ſhall be ſeen.*

Eighth Demand.

Laſtly, *Were theſe things caſual and contingent, how can it be, that they ſhould fall out ſo immediately upon, and conſonantly to the Prayers of the Saints? So that in many Providences, they are able to diſcern a very clear anſwer to their Prayers, and are ſure they have the Petitions they asked of him,* 1 John 5. 15.

Thus when the Sea divided it ſelf, juſt upon *Iſraels* cry to Heaven, *Exod.* 14. 10. When ſo ſignal a Victory is given to *Aſa*, immediately upon that Pathetical cry to Heaven, *Help us O Lord our God*, 2 Chron. 14. 11, 12. When *Ahitophel* ſhall go and hang himſelf, juſt upon that Prayer of diſtreſſed *David*, 2 Sam. 15. 31. When *Haman* ſhall fall and his Plot be broken, juſt upon the Faſt kept by *Mordecai* and *Heſter*, Eſth. 4. 16. Our own *Speed*, in his Hiſtory of *Britain*, tells us, that *Richard* the Firſt beſieged a Caſtle with his Army, they offered to ſurrender, if he would ſave their Lives; he refuſes, and threatens to hang them all: Upon this an *Arbalaſter* charged his Bow with a ſquare Arrow, making firſt his Prayer to God, that he would direct the ſhot, and deliver the Innocent from Oppreſſion; it ſtruck the *King* himſelf, whereof he dyed, and they were delivered. *Abraham*'s Servant prayed for ſucceſs; and ſee how it was anſwered, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Peter* was caſt into Priſon, and Prayer was made for him by the Church, and ſee the Event, *Acts* 12. 5, 6, 7, 12. I could eaſily add to theſe, the wonderful Examples of the return of Prayers which was obſerved in *Luther*, and

Dr.

Dr. *Winter* in *Ireland*, and many more; but I judge it needleſs, becauſe moſt Chriſtians have a ſtock of Experience of their own, and are well aſſured, that many of the Providences that befal them are, and can be no other than the return of their Prayers.

And now who can be diſſatisfied in this Point that wiſely conſider theſe things? Muſt we not conclude as it is, *Job* 36. 7. *He withdraweth not his Eye from the Righteous:* And as 2 *Chron.* 16. 9. *The Eyes of the Lord run to and fro through the whole Earth, to ſhew himſelf ſtrong in the behalf of them whoſe Heart is perfect towards him.* His Providences proclaim him to be a God hearing Prayers.

The Second General Head.

Having proved, That the Concernments of the Saints in this World, are certainly conducted by the Wiſdom and Care of ſpecial Providence; my next Work is to ſhew you, *In what Affairs and Concerns of theirs, the Providence of God doth more eſpecially appear; or what are the moſt remarkable performances of Providence for them in this World.*

And here I am not led directly by my Text, to ſpeak of the moſt Internal and Spiritual Performances of Providence, immediately relating to the Souls of his People; though they all relate to their Souls mediately and eventually; but of the more viſible and external Performances of Providence for them: And it is not to be ſuppoſed, I ſhould touch all theſe neither; they are more than the Sands; but that which I aim at, is to Diſcourſe to you ſome more ſpecial

and

and more observable performances of Providence for you. And we shall begin at the beginning.

The first Performance of Providence.

I.

And *First*, Let us consider, how well Providence hath performed the first Work that ever it did for us, in our *Formation* and *Protection* in the *Womb*. Certainly, this is a very glorious and admirable Performance; it's that the *Psalmist* admires, *Psalm* 139. 15. *My Substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lower Parts of the Earth.* The Womb is so called upon this account, because as curious Artists, when they have some choice Piece in Hand, perfect it in Private, and then bring it into the Light for all to gaze at; so it was here. And there are two Things admirable in this performance of Providence for us.

Providential Performances in our formation and Protection in the womb.

1. The rare Structure and excellent Composition of the Body; *I am wonderfully made*; that Word *Ruchampti* —— is very full. The Vulgar renders it, *painted as with a Needle*, (*i. e.*) richly Embroidered with Nerves and Veins. Oh the curious Workmanship that is in that one part the Eye! How hath it forced some to acknowledge a God upon the Examination of it! Providence, when it went about this Work, had its model or pattern before it, according to which it molded every part, as it is, *Ver.* 16. *In thy Book were all my members written.* Hast thou an integral Perfection and fulness of Members? It is because he wrote them all in his Book, or limned out thy

Metaphora ab acupictoribus in opere Phrygionico. Omnia operatus est dominus in pondere, numero, & mensura.

Body, according to that exact model which he drew of thee in his own gracious purpose, before thou hadst a Being: Had an Eye, an Ear, a Hand, a Foot been wanting in the Platform, thou hadst now been sadly sensible of the defect: This World had been but a Dungeon to thee, without those Windows: Thou hadst lived, as many do, an Object, of Pity to others: If thou have low Thoughts of this Mercy, ask the Blind, the Deaf, the Lame and the Dumb, the value and worth of those Mercies, and they will tell thee. There is a World of cost bestowed upon thy very Body. Thou mightest have been cast into another Mould, and Created a Worm or a Toad. I remember *Luther* tells us of two *Cardinals*, riding in great pomp to the Council of *Constance*, and by the Way they heard a Man in the Fields bitterly weeping and wailing: When they came to him, they found him intently viewing an ugly *Toad*; and asking him, why he wept so bitterly, he told them, his Heart was melted with this Consideration, that God had not made him such a loathsome and Deformed Creature; *hoc est quod amarè fleo*, said he: Whereupon one of them cryes out, Well said the Father, *Surgunt indocti & rapient Cœlum*, The unlearned will rise and take Heaven, and we with all our Learning shall be cast into Hell. No part of the *Common Lump* was so figured and polisht as *Man* is. *Galen* gave *Epicurus* an hundred Years Time to imagine a more commodious Scituation, Configuration, or

Luther in tertium Præcept.

There are some members that are *radical*, as the Liver, Heart and Brain, in these are placed the natural, vital and animal Spirits; these Spirits are carried by the Veins, Arteries & Nerves.

The Veins carry the natural Spirits from the Liver, the Arteries the vital Spirits from the Heart, the Nerves the animal Spirits from the Brain: Other members are *official*, as the hands and feet: The Superiour doth rule the Inferiour, and the Inferiour support the Superiour. *In wisdom hast thou made them all.*

com-

compoſition of any one member of a humane body. And if all the *Angels* had ſtudied to this day, they could not have caſt the body of *man* into a more curious mould.

2. And yet all this is but the enamelling of the Caſe, or poliſhing the Casket wherein the rare Jewel lies. Providence hath not only built the houſe, but brought the Inhabitant (I mean the ſoul) into the poſſeſſion of it. A glorious piece it is, that bears the very Image of God upon it, being all in all, and all in every part. How noble are its Faculties and Affections? How nimble, various and indefatigable are its Motions? How comprehenſive is its Capacity? It's a Companion for *Angels*, nay, capable of Eſpouſals to *Chriſt*, and eternal Communion with God. It's the Wonder of Earth, and the Envy of Hell.

Suppoſe now (and why ſhould you not ſuppoſe, what you ſo frequently behold in the world?) that Providence had ſo permitted and ordered it, that thy ſoul had entred into thy body with one or two of its faculties wounded and defective: Suppoſe its *Underſtanding* had been crackt: what a miſerable life hadſt thou lived in this world? neither capable of *ſervice* nor *comfort*. And truly, when I have conſidered thoſe works of Providence, in bringing into the world in all Countreys and Ages ſome ſuch ſpectacles of pity; ſome deprived of the uſe of reaſon, and differing from Beaſts, in little more than ſhape and figure; and others, though found in their underſtandings, yet deformed or defective in their bodies, monſtrous, miſhapen and loathſome Creatures; I can reſolve the deſign of this Providence, into nothing beſide a demonſtra-

tion of his Soveraign power: except they be designed as foils, to set off the beauty of other rare and exquisite pieces, and intended to stand before your eyes, as Monitors of Gods mercy to you, that your hearts (as oft as you beheld them) might be melted into thankfulness for distinguishing favour to you.

Look then (but not proudly) upon thy outside and inside, see and admire what Providence hath done for thee, and how well it hath *performed* the first service that ever it did for thee in this world. And yet, this was not all it did for thee, before thou saweſt this world. It preserved thee, as well as formed thee in the womb: else thou hadst been as those *Embryo's Job* speaks of, Job 3. 11, 12. *that never saw the light.* *Abortives* go for nothing in the world, and there are multitudes of them, some that never had a reasonable soul breathed into them; but only the rudiments, and rough draught of body: these come not into the account of men, but perish as the Beast doth. Others that dye in, or shortly after they come out of the Womb: and though their life was but for a moment; yet that moment entails an Eternity upon them: and had this been your case, as it is the case of Millions then (supposing your salvation) yet had you been utterly unserviceable to God in the world. None had been the better for you, nor you the better for any in the world. You had been utterly uncapable of all that good which throughout your life you have either done to others, or received from others.

And if we consider the nature of that obscure life we lived in the womb; how small an acci-

den-

dent (had it been permitted by Providence) had extinguished our life, like a Bird in the shell? We cannot therefore but admire the tender care of Providence over us, and say with the *Psalmist*, Psal. 139. 13. *Thou hast covered me in my Mothers womb:* and not only so, but as it is, Psal. 22. 9. *Thou art he that took me out of my Mothers womb.* He preserved thee there to the fulness of time, and when that time was come, brought thee safely through manifold hazards, into that place in the world which he from Eternity espied for thee, Which leads us to the second performance

The Second Performance of Providence.

II.

Providential performances with respect to the time and place of our Nativity.

The second great performance of Providence, for the people of God, respects the place, and time in which it ordered their Nativity to fall. And truly, this is no small concernment to every one of us, but of vast consequence, either to our good or evil, though it be little minded by most men. I am perswaded, the thoughts of few Christians penetrate deep enough into this Providence, but slide too slightly and superficially over an Abyss of much mercy, rich and manifold mercy wrapt up in this gracious *performance* of Providence for them.

Ah friends! can you think it an indifferent thing, into what part of the World the womb of Nature had cast you out? Is there no odds, upon what spot of the Creation, or in what Age of the World your lot had fallen? It may be you have not seriously bethought your selves about this matter. And because this Point is so sel-

dom toucht, I will therefore dive a little more particularly and distinctly into it, and endeavour to warm your affections with a representation of the many and rich benefits you owe to this one *performance* of *Providence* for you.

And we will consider it under a double respect or relation, as it respects your present comfort in this world, and as it relates to your eternal happiness in the world to come.

1. This performance of Providence for you, doth very much concern your *present comfort* in this world. All the rooms in this great house are not alike pleasant and commodious for the Inhabitants of it. You read *Psal.* 74. 20. of *the dark places of the Earth*, which *are full of the habitations of cruelty*: and many such dismal places are found in the habitable Earth. What a vast tract of the world lies as a waste Wilderness?

Suppose your Mothers had brought you forth in *America*, among the *Salvage Indians*, who herd together as brute beasts; are scorched whith heat and starved with cold; being naked, destitute and defenceless. How poor, miserable and unprovided of Earthly comforts and accommodations, are many Millions of the Inhabitants of this world? What mercies do you enjoy in respect of the amænity, fertility, temperature and civility of the place of your habitation? What is it but a Garden inclosed out of a Wilderness? I may without partiality or vanity say, God hath (even upon temporal accounts) provided you with one of the healthfullest, pleasantest, and in all respects, the best furnished room in all the great house of this world. Hear what our own *Chronicler* saith of it, *It is the fortunate Island*

Island, the Paradise of pleasure, the Garden of God; whose Valleys are like Eden, *whose Hills are as* Lebanon, *whose Springs are as* Pisgah. *whose Rivers are as* Jordan, *whose Wall is the Ocean, and whose Defence is the* Lord Jehovah. Speed's Chron.

You are here provided of necessary and comfortable accommodations for your bodies, that a great part of the world are unacquainted with. It is not with the poorest among us, as it is said to be with the poor *Russians*, whose poverty pinches and bites with such sharp teeth, that their poor cry at the doors, *Give me and cut me, give me and kill me.*

Say not, The barbarous Nations in this excel you: that they possess the *Mines* of Silver and Gold, which it may be you think enough to salve all other inconveniences of life. Alas poor Creatures! better had it been for them, if their Countrey had brought forth *Bryers* and *Thorns* instead of *Gold*, *Silver*, and *precious stones*; for this hath been the occasion of ruining all their other comforts in this world: this hath invited their cruel avaritious enemies among them, under whose servitude they groan, and dye without mercy: and thousands of them have chosen death rather than life, on the terms they enjoyed it. And why might not your lot have fallen there as well as where it is? Are not they made of the same clay, and endowed with as good a nature as your selves? O what a distinction hath Divine Mercy made, where Nature made none! Consider ungrateful man, thou mightest have fallen into some of those Regions, where a tainted air frequently cloyes the jaws of Death, where the Inhabitants differ very little from the Beasts

in the manner of their living: but God hath provided for thee, and given the pooreſt among us far better accommodations of life, than the greateſt among them are ordinarily provided with. O what hath Providence done for you?

But all that I have ſaid is very inconſiderable in compariſon with the *ſpiritual mercies*, and advantages you here enjoy for your ſouls. Oh this is ſuch an advantageous caſt of Providence for you, as obliges you to a thankful acknowledgement of it, to all Eternity. For let us here make but a few ſuppoſitions in the caſe before us, and the glory of Providence will ſhine like a Sun-beam full in your faces.

(1.) Suppoſe it had been your Lot to have fallen in any of thoſe vaſt *Continents* poſſeſſed by *Pagans* and *Heathens* at this day, who bow down to the Stock of a Tree, and worſhip the Hoſt of Heaven. This is the caſe of Millions, and Millions of Millions: for *Pagan Idolaters* (as that ſearching Scholar Mr. *Brierwood* informs us) do not only fill the circumference of nine hundred miles in *Europe*, but almoſt the one half of *Africa*, more than the half of *Aſia*, and almoſt the whole of *America*.

Brierwoods Enquiries, chap. 13. p. 118, 119

Oh how deplorable had thy caſe been, if a *Pagan Idolatreſs* had brought thee forth, and Idolatry had been ſuckt in with thy Mothers milk! then in all probability, thou hadſt been at this day worſhipping *Devils*, and poſting with full ſpeed in the direct road to Damnation: for theſe are the people of Gods wrath, Jer. 10. 25. *Pour out thy fury upon the Heathen that know thee not, and upon the families that call not upon thy name.* How dreadful is that imprecation againſt them?

Pſalm

Psalm. 97. 7. which takes hold of them and all that's theirs, *Confounded be all they that serve graven Images, that boast themselves of Idols.*

(2.) Or suppose your Lot had fallen among *Mahometans*, who next to Pagans spread over the greatest tract of the Earth, for though *Arabia* bred that unclean Bird, yet it was not that Cage, that could long contain him; for, not only the *Arabians*, but the *Persians*, *Turks* and *Tartars*, do all bow down their backs under that grand Impostor. This poison hath dispersed it self through the veins of *Asia*, over a great part of *Africk*, even the Circumference of seven thousand miles, and stops not there, but hath tainted a considerable part of *Europe* also.

Had your Lot fallen here, O what unhappy men and women had you been, notwithstanding the natural amenity and pleasantness of your native soil? You had then adored a *grand Impostor*, and dyed in a fools *Paradise*. Instead of Gods lively *Oracles*, you had been (as they now are) deceived to your eternal ruine with such fond, mad and wild dreams, as whoso considers would think, the *Authors* had more need of manacles and fetters, than arguments or sober answers.

(3.) Or if neither of these had been your Lot, but you had been emptied by the womb of Nature into this little spot of the Earth which is *Christianized* by profession, but nevertheless for the most part over-run by *Popish Idolatry*, and *Antichristian* delusions; what unhappy men and women had you been, had you suckt a Popish breast? For this people are to be the subjects of the *Vials* of Gods wrath to be poured out successively upon them, as you may read *Rev.* 16.

and

and the Scriptures in round and plain language tell us, what their fate muſt be, 2 Theſſ. 2. 11, 12. *And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong delu-ſion, that they ſhould believe a lye, that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had plea-ſure in unrighteouſneſs.*

Nay, you might have fallen into the ſame *Land* in which your habitation now is, and yet have had no advantage by it as to ſalvation, if he that choſe the bounds of your habitations, had not alſo graciouſly determined the times for you, *Acts* 17. 26. For,

(4.) Suppoſe your Lot had fallen where it is during the *Pagan* State of *England*, who for many hundred years were groſs and vile Idolaters. Thick darkneſs over-ſpread the people of this *Iſland*, and as in other Countreys, the *Devil* was worſhiped, and his lying Oracles zealouſly attended upon.

The ſhaking of the top of *Jupiter*'s Oak in *Dodona*, the Caldron ſmitten with the rod in the hand of *Jupiter*'s Image, the *Lawrell* and *Fountain* in *Daphne*: theſe were the Ordinances on which the poor deluded Wretches waited. So in this Nation they worſhipped Idols alſo: the Sun and Moon were adored for Gods, with many other abominable Idols which our Anceſtors worſhipped, and whoſe memorials are not to this day quite obliterated among us.

Vide Verſtigan's Britiſh Antiquities.

(5.) Or ſuppoſe our Lot had fallen in thoſe later miſerable days, in which *Queen Mary* ſent ſo many hundreds to Heaven in a fiery Chariot, and the poor *Proteſtants* skulked up and down in holes and woods, to preſerve them from *Popiſh Inquiſitors*, who like Blood-hounds, hunted up and

and down through all the Cities, Towns and Villages of the Nation, to seek out the poor sheep of Christ for a prey.

But such hath the special care of Providence towards us been, that our turn to be brought upon the stage of this World was graciously reserved for better days: so that if we had had our own option, we could not have chosen for our selves, as Providence hath. We are not only furnished with the best room in this great house; but before we were put into it, it was swept with the beesom of National Reformation, from *Idolatry*, yea, and washed by the blood of *Martyrs* from Popish filthiness; and adorned with Gospel lights, shining in as great lustre in our days, as ever they did since the *Apostles* days. You might have been born in *England* for many Ages, and not have found a *Christian* in it: yea, and since *Christianity* was here owned, and not have met a *Protestant* in it. Oh what an Obligation hath Providence laid you under, by such a merciful performance as this for you?

If you say, *All this indeed is true? but what is this to eternal salvation? Do not multitudes that enjoy these priviledges, eternally perish notwithstanding them? yea, and perish with an aggravation of sin and misery beyond other sinners?* *Object.*

True, they do so; and it is of very sad consideration that it should be so; but yet we cannot deny this to be a very choice and singular mercy, to be born in such a Land, and at such a Time. For let us consider what helps for salvation men here enjoy, beyond what they could enjoy, had their Lot fallen according to the fore-mentioned suppositions. *Sol.*

(1.) Here

(1.) Here we enjoy the ordinary means of ſalvation, which elſewhere men are denyed and cut off from. So that if any among the *Heathen* be ſaved and brought to *Chriſt*, it muſt be in ſome miraculous or extraordinary way: for, *How ſhall they believe in him of whom they have not heard, and how ſhall they hear without a Preacher?* Rom. 10. 14. Alas! were there a deſire awakened in any of their hearts after a Goſpel diſcovery of ſalvation, (which ordinarily is not, nor can be rationally ſuppoſed) yet, poor Creatures they might travel from Sea to Sea, to hear the Word, and not find it: whereas you can hardly miſs the opportunities of hearing the Goſpel. Sermons meet you frequently; ſo that you can ſcarcely ſhun or avoid the Ordinances and Inſtruments of your ſalvation. And is this nothing? Chriſt even forces himſelf upon us.

(2.) Here, in this Age of the World, the common prejudices againſt Chriſtianity are removed, by the advantage it hath of a publick profeſſion among the people, and protection by the Laws of the Countrey. Whereas, were your habitation among *Jews*, *Mahometans*, or *Heathen Idolaters*, you would find *Chriſt* and *Chriſtianiey* the common *odium* of the Countrey; every one defying and deriding both name and thing; and ſuch your ſelves likely had been, if your birth and education had been among them. For you may obſerve, that whatever is παραδόσεως traditionally delivered down from Father to Son, every one is fond of, and zealous in its defence. The *Jews*, *Heathens* and *Mahometans* are at this day ſo tenacious of their errors, that with ſpitting, hiſſing, and clapping of hands and all other ſigns

signs of indignation and abhorrence they chase away all others from among them.

Is it not then a special mercy to you to be cast into such a Countrey and Age, where (as a learned Divine observes) the true Religion hath the same advantages over every false one, as in other Countreys they have over it? Here you have the presence of precious Means, and the absence of soul-destroying prejudices, two signal mercies. Mr. *Pinke.*

(3.) Here, in this Age of the World, Christianity bespeaks you assoon as you are capable of any sense, or impressions of Religion upon you? and so by an happy *Anticipation*, blocks up the passages, by which a false Religion would else certainly enter. Here you suck in the first notions and principles of Christianity, even with the Mothers milk: and certainly, such a prepossession is a choice advantage. *Quo semel est imbuta, recens servabit odorem Testa diu. Train up a Child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it*, Prov. 22. 6.

(4.) Here you have, or may have the help and assistance of Christians to direct your way, resolve your doubts, support your burthens, and help you through those difficulties that attend the new birth. Alas! if a poor soul had any beginnings or faint workings and stirrings after Christ and true Religion in many other Countreys, the hand of every man would presently be against him, and none would be found to relieve, assist or encourage, as you may see in that Example of *Galeacius*; the neareſt relations would, in that case, prove the greatest Enemies, the Countrey would quickly hoot at him as a Monster, and cry

Away

Away with the *Heretick* to the Priſon or Stake.

Whether theſe eventually prove bleſſings to your ſouls or no, certain I am, that in themſelves they are ſingular mercies, and helps to ſalvation, that are denyed to Millions beſides you. So that if *Plato* when he was near his death, could bleſs God for three things, *viz.* That he was a Man and not a Beaſt: that he was born in *Greece*; and brought up in the time of *Socrates*: much more cauſe have you to admire Providence, that you are Men, and not Beaſts; that you were born in *England*, and brought up in Goſpel days here. This is a Land the Lord hath *Eſpied* for you, as the expreſſion is, *Ezek.* 20. 6. and concerning it you have abudant cauſe to ſay, as in another caſe the *Pſalmiſt* doth, Pſal. 16. 6. *The lines are fallen to me in pleaſant places, and I have a goodly heritage.*

The Third Performance of Providence.

III.

Providential performances with reſpect to the Stock and Family out of which we ſprang.

The next obſervable Performance of Providence, which muſt be heedfully adverted and weighed, is the deſignation of the ſtock and family out of which we ſhould ſpring and riſe. And truly, this is of ſpecial conſideration, both as to our temporal and eternal good: for whether the Families in which we grew up, were great or ſmall in *Iſrael*; whether our parents were of a higher or lower *Claſs*, and rank among men, yet if they were ſuch as feared God and wrought righteouſneſs, if they took any care to educate you religiouſly, and trained you up *in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*, you are bound to reckon it among

among your chief mercies, that you ſprung from the loins of ſuch parents: for from this Spring a double ſtream of mercy riſes to you.

(1.) Temporal and external mercies to your outward man. You cannot but know, that as Godlineſs entails a bleſſing, ſo wickedneſs and unrighteouſneſs a curſe upon poſterity. An inſtance of the former you have in *Gen.* 17. 18, 20. On the contrary, you have the threatning, *Zech.* 5. 4. and both together, Prov. 3. 33. *The Curſe of the Lord is in the houſe of the wicked, but he bleſſeth the habitation of the juſt.* True it is, that both theſe imply the Childrens treading in the ſteps of their *Parents*, according to *Ezek.* 18. but how frequently is it ſeen, that wicked men breed their children vainly and wickedly; ſo that as it's ſaid of *Abijam*, 1 Kings 15. 3. *He walked in all the ſins of his father, which he had done before him*; and ſo the curſe is entail'd from generation to generation. To eſcape this Curſe, is a choice Providence.

(2.) But eſpecially take notice, what a ſtream of *ſpiritual bleſſings* and mercies, flows from this Providence to the Inner man. O it's no common mercy, to deſcend from pious Parents: Some of us do not only owe our natural life to them, as Inſtruments of our Beings, but our Spiritual and Eternal life alſo. It was no ſmall mercy to *Timothy*, to be deſcended from ſuch Progenitors, 2 *Tim.* 1. 5. nor to *Auguſtine*, that he had ſuch a Mother as *Monica*, who planted in his mind the precepts of life with her Words, watered them with her Tears, and nouriſhed them with her Example. We will a little more particularly inſpect this mercy, and in ſo doing, we ſhall find manifold mercies contained in it. (1.)

(1.) What a Mercy was it to us, to have Parents that prayed for us before they had us, as well as in our Infancy, when we could not pray for our ſelves? Thus did *Abraham*, *Gen*, 15. 2. and *Hannah*, 1 *Sam.* 1. 10, 11. and ſome here likely are the fruits and returns of their *Parents* Prayers. This was that holy courſe they continued all their dayes for you, carrying all your concerns, eſpecially your Eternal ones before the Lord with their own; and pouring out their ſouls to God ſo affectionately for you, when their eye-ſtrings and heart-ſtrings were breaking. Oh put a value upon ſuch Mercies; for they are precious. It's a greater Mercy, to deſcend from praying Parents, than from the loyns of Nobles. See *Job*'s pious practice, *Job* 1. 5.

(2.) What a ſpecial Mercy was it to us, to have the excreſcencies of corruption nipt in the bud by their pious and careful diſcipline? We now underſtand, what a critical and dangerous ſeaſon Youth is, the wonderful proclivity of that Age to every thing that is evil. Why elſe are they called Youthful luſts? 2 *Tim.* 2. 22. When *David* asketh, *Wherewith ſhall a young man cleanſe his way?* it's plainly enough implyed in the very Queſtion, that the way he takes lieth through the pollutions of the world in his youth, *Pſal.* 119. 9. When you find a *David* praying, that God would *not remember the ſins of his youth*, Pſal. 25. 7. and a *Job* bitterly complaining, that God *made him to poſſeſs the ſins of his youth*, Job 13. 26. Sure, you cannot but reflect, with a very thankful heart, upon thoſe happy means, by which the corruption of your nature was happily prevented, or reſtrained in your Youth.

(3.) And

(3.) And how great a Mercy was it, that we had Parents, who carefully instilled the good Knowledge of God into our Souls in our tender Years? How careful was *Abraham* of this Duty? *Gen.* 18. 19. And *David?* 1 Chron. 28. 9. We have some of us had Parents, who might say to us, as the *Apostle*, Gal. 4. 19. *My little Children, of whom I travel again in Birth till Christ be formed in you.* As they longed for us before they had us, and rejoyced in us when they had us; so they could not endure to think, that when they could have us no more, the Devil should. As they thought no Pains, Care or Cost too much for our Bodies to Feed them, Cloath and Heal them; so did they think no Prayers, Counsels or Tears, too much for our Souls, that they might be saved. They knew a parting Time would come betwixt them and us, and did strive to make it as easie and comfortable to them as they could, by leaving us in *Christ*, and within the blessed Bond of his Covenant.

They were not glad, that we had Health, and indifferent whether we had Grace.

They as sensibly felt the Miseries of our Souls as of our Bodies; and nothing was more desirable to them, than that they might say in the great Day, Lord, here am I, and the Children which thou hast given me.

(4.) And was it not a special Favour to us, to have *Parents* that went before us as Patterns of Holiness, and beat the Path to Heaven for us by their Examples? Who could say to us, as *Phil.* 4. 9. *What Things ye have heard and seen in me, that do*; and as 1 *Cor.* 11. 1. *Be ye followers of us, as we are of Christ.* The *Parents* Life is the *Childs* Copy. O 'tis no common Mercy, to have a fair

Copy ſet before us, eſpecially in the moulding age: We ſaw what they did, as well as heard what they ſaid. It was *Abraham*'s Commendation, that he commanded his Children, and his houſhold *after him*, to keep the way of the Lord. And ſuch Mercies ſome of us have had alſo.

Ah my Friends, let me beg you, that you will ſet ſpecial Remarks upon this Providence, which ſo graciouſly wrought for you: And that your Hearts may be more throughly warmed in the Senſe of it, compare your Condition with others, and ſeriouſly bethink your ſelves,

(1.) How many Children there be among us, that are drawn headlong to Hell by their cruel and ungodly Parents, who teach them to curſe and ſwear aſſoon as they can ſpeak? Many Families there are, wherein little other Language is heard, but what is the Dialect of Hell. Theſe, like the old Logs and ſmall ſpray, are preparing for the Fire of Hell, where they muſt burn together. Of ſuch Children, that Scripture, *Pſalm* 49. 19. will one day be verified, except they repent, *They ſhall go to the Generation of their Fathers, where they ſhall not ſee Light.*

(2.) And how many Families are there, though not ſo prophane, who yet breed up their Children vainly and ſenſually, as *Job* 21. 11, &c. take no care what becomes of their Souls, ſo they can but provide for their Bodies? If they can but teach them to carry their Bodies, no matter if the Devil act their Souls: If they can but leave them Lands or Moneys, they think they have very fully diſcharged their Duties. O what will the Language be, wherewith ſuch Parents and Children ſhall greet each other at the Judgment-Seat, and in Hell for ever?

(3.) And

(3.) And how many be there, who are more *sober*, and yet hate the least appearances of Godliness in their *Children?* Who instead of cherishing, do all that they can to break bruised Reeds, and quench smoaking Flax, to stifle and strangle the first appearances, and offers they make towards Christ? Who had rather accompany them to their *Graves*, than to *Christ*, doing all that in them lyes, *Herod* like, to kill *Christ* in the *Cradle?* Ah Sirs, ye little know, what a Mercy ye do or have enjoyed in Godly Parents, and what a good Lot Providence cast for you in this Concernment of your Bodies and Souls.

If any shall say, *This was not their Case, they had little help Heaven-ward from their Parents:* To such I shall only Reply three Things. *Object.*

(1.) If you had little furtherance, yet own it as a special Providence, that you had no hinderance; or, if you had Opposition, yet *Sol.*

(2.) Admire the Grace of God, in plucking you out by a wonderful distinguishing Hand of Mercy from among them, and keeping alive the languishing sparks of Grace amidst the floods of opposition.

(3.) And learn from hence, if God give you a Posterity of your own, to be so much the more strict and careful of Relational Duties, by how much you have sensibly felt the want of it in your selves.

But seeing such a Train of Blessings, both as to this Life, and that to come, follow upon an holy Education of Children; I will not dismiss the Point, till I have discharged my Duty, in exhorting Parents and Children to their Duties.

And first for you that are *Parents*, or to whom the Education of Children is committed, I beseech you mind, how concerning a Duty lies on

you: And that I may effectually preſs it, conſider,

(1.) How near the Relation is betwixt you and your Children, and therefore how much you are concerned in their Happineſs or Miſery. Conſider but the Scripture account of the dearneſs of ſuch Relations, expreſſed (1.) By longings for them; as *Gen.* 15. 2. *Gen.* 30. 1. And (2.) By our Joy when we have them, as Chriſt expreſſes it, *John* 16. 21. (3.) The high value ſet on them, *Gen.* 42. 38. (4.) The ſympathy with them in all their troubles, *Mark* 9. 22. And (5.) By our Sorrow at parting, *Gen.* 37. 35. Now ſhall all this be to no purpoſe? For to what purpoſe do we deſire them before we have them, rejoyce in them when we have them, value them ſo highly, ſympathize with them ſo tenderly, grieve for their Death ſo exceſſively; if in the mean time no Care be taken what ſhall become of them to Eternity?

(2.) How God hath charged you with their Souls, as well as Bodies: And this appears by two ſorts of Precepts. (1.) Precepts directly laid upon you, *Deut.* 6. 6, 7. and *Eph.* 6. 4. (2.) By Precepts laid on them to obey you, *Eph.* 6, 1. which plainly implies your Duty, as well as expreſſes theirs.

(3. What ſhall Comfort you at the parting Time, if they Dye through your neglect in a Chriſtleſs Condition? Oh this is the cutting Conſideration, My *Child* is in *Hell*, and I did nothing to prevent it; I helped him thither. Duty diſcharged, is the only root of Comfort in that Day.

(4.) If you neglect to inſtruct them in the way of *Holineſs*, will the Devil neglect to inſtruct them in the Way of *Wickedneſs*? No, no, if you will

will not teach them to *Pray*, he will to *Curse*, *Swear* and *Lye*. If ground be uncultivated, weeds will Spring.

(5.) If the Season of their Youth be neglected, how little probability is there of any good Fruit afterwards? That is the Moulding Age, *Prov.*22.6. How few are Converted in Old Age? A twig is brought to any form, but grown Limbs will not bow.

(6.) You are instrumental Causes of all their spiritual Misery; and that (1.) By *Generation*, (2.) *Imitation*, they lye spiritually Dead of the Plague which you brought home among them, *Psalm* 51. 5. *Behold, I was shapen in Iniquity, and in Sin did my Mother conceive* (or warm) *me.*

(7.) There's none in the World so likely as you, to be Instruments of their Eternal good. You have peculiar Advantages that none other hath; as (1.) The interest you have in their Affections. (2.) Your opportunities to instil the Knowledge of Christ into them, being daily with them, *Deut.* 6. 7. (3.) Your Knowledge of their Tempers: If therefore you neglect, who shall help them?

(8.) The Consideration of the great Day, should move your Bowels of Pity for them. O remember that Text, *Rev.* 20. 12, &c. *I saw the dead small and great stand before God.* What a sad thing will it be, to see your dear Children at Christs left Hand? O Friends, do your utmost to prevent this Misery. *Knowing the Terrors of the Lord, we perswade Men.*

2. And you *Children*, especially you that sprang from religious *Parents*, I beseech you, obey their Counsels; and tread in the steps of their pious Examples. To press this, I offer these Considerations.

(1.) Your disobedience to them, is a resisting of Gods Authority, *Ephes.* 6. 1. *Children, obey your Parents in the Lord:* There's the Command: Your Rebellion therefore runs higher than you think. It is not Man, but God that you disobey; and for your disobedience God will punish you. It may be, their tenderness will not suffer them, or you are grown beyond their Correction: All they can do, is to complain to God; and if so, he will handle you more severely than they could do.

(2.) Your Sin is greater than the Sin of young *Heathens* and *Infidels*; and so will your Account be also. O better (if a wicked Child) that thou hadst been the off-spring of Salvage *Indians*, nay, of Beasts, than of such Parents. So many Counsels disobeyed, Hopes and Prayers frustrated, will turn to sad Aggravations.

(3.) It's usual with God, to retaliate Mens disobedience to their Parents in kind: Commonly our own Children shall pay us home for it. I have read in a grave *Author*, of a wicked Wretch that drag'd his Father along the House: The Father begg'd him, not to draw him beyond such a Place: For, said he, I drag'd my Father no farther. O the sad, but just Retributions of God!

And for you, in whose Hearts Grace hath been planted by the Blessing of Education, I beseech you to admire Gods goodness to you in this *Providence.* Oh what an happy Lot hath God cast for you! How few Children are Partakers of your Mercies?

See that you Honour such Parents; the tie is double upon you so to do. Be you the Joy of their Hearts, and Comfort of their Lives, if living:

ing: If not, yet still remember the Mercy while *you* live, and tread in their Pious Path; that you and they may both rejoyce together in the great Day, and bless God for each other to all Eternity.

The Fourth Performance of Providence.

IV.

The next remaarkable Performance of Providence for the People of God in which I will instance, shall be with respect to its ordering the Occasions, Instruments and Means of their Conversion.

Providential Performances about our Conversion to God.

In nothing doth *Providence* shine forth more gloriously in this World, than it doth in this performance for the People of God. How curiously soever its hand had moulded your Bodies, how tenderly soever it had preserved them, and how bountifully soever it had provided for them; if it had not also ordered some means or other for your Conversion, all the former Favours and Benefits it had done for you, had signified little. This, O this is the most excellent Benefit you ever received from its hand. You are more beholden to it for this, than for all your other Mercies. And in opening this Performance of Providence, I cannot but think your Hearts must be deeply affected. This is a subject which every gracious Heart loves to steep its Thoughts in. It's certainly the sweetest History that ever they repeated: They love to think and talk of it. The Places where, and Instruments by whom this Work was wrought, are exceedingly endeared to them for the Works sake: Yea, endeared to that degree, that for many Years after their Hearts have melted, when they have but passed occasionally by those Places, or but seen the Faces of those Per-

sons, that were used as Instruments in the Hand of Providence for their good. As no doubt, but * Gen. 48. 3. * *Jacob*'s *Beth-el* was ever after that Night sweet to his Thoughts: So other Saints have had their *Bethels* as well as he. O blessed Places, Times and Instruments! O the deep, the sweet Impressions, never to be razed out of the Memory or Heart, that this Providence hath made upon those on whom it wrought this blessed Effect at Years of Discretion, and in a more sensible way!

But lest any Poor Soul should be discouraged under the display of this Providence, because he cannot remember the Time, Place, Instruments and Manner wherein, and by which Conversion-work was wrought; I will therefore Premise this necessary Distinction, to prevent injury to some, whilst I Design Benefit to others.

Conversion, as to the subjects of it, may be considered two Ways; either as it is more sensibly wrought in Persons of riper Years, who in their youthful Days were more prophane and vile; or upon Persons in their tender Years, into whose Hearts Grace was more insensibly, and undiscernably instilled by Gods Blessings upon pious Education. In the former sort, the distinct Acts of the Spirit, as *illuminating*, *convincing*, *humbling*, *drawing* them to *Christ*, and *sealing* them are more evident and discernable: In the latter, more obscure and confused; they can remember, that God gave them an Esteem and liking of godly Persons, Care of Duty, and Conscience of Sin; but as to the Time, Place, Instruments and Manner of the Work, they can give but a slender account of them: However, if the Work be savingly wrought in them, there is no Reason they should be troubled, because the Circumstances of it

it are not ſo evident to them, as they are to others. Let the ſubſtance and reality of the Work appear, and there is no Reaſon to afflict your ſelves, becauſe of the inevidence of ſuch Circumſtances.

But yet where the Circumſtances as well as Subſtance are clear to a Man: When we can call to remembrance, the Time when, the Place where, the Inſtrument by whom that Work was wrought, it muſt needs be exceeding ſweet: And they cannot but yield a freſh Delight to the Soul every Time they are reflected upon.

There are many of the following Occaſions, which it may be, we took for *ſtraglers* when they firſt befel us: But they proved *ſcouts* ſent out from the main Body of Providence, which they make way for.

Now there be divers Things in thoſe Providences, that are verſant about this Work, which are exceeding ſweet, and taking; as namely,

1. The wonderful *ſtrangeneſs* and unaccountableneſs of this Work of Providence, in caſting us into the way, and ordering the occaſions, yea, the minuteſt Circumſtances about this Work. Thus you find in *Acts* 8. 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, &c. The *Eunuch* at that very inſtant when he was reading the Prophet *Iſaiah*, hath an Interpreter, one among a Thouſand, that joins his *Chariot*, juſt as his Mind was by a fit occaſion prepared to receive the firſt Light of the Knowledge of *Chriſt*.

And how ſtrange was that Change (how far ſoever it went) upon *Naaman* the *Syrian*? recorded 2 *Kings* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. That the *Syrians* in their incurſion ſhould bring away this Girl, (likely her Beauty was the inducement,) and ſhe muſt be preſented to *Naaman*'s Wife, and relate to her

her the Power of God that accompanied the *Prophet*; though you find in that particular Case there had never been an instance given before, *Luke* 4. 27. Doubtless, the whole of this affair was guided by the signal Direction of Providence.

So for the Conversion of the *Samaritans*, it's observed *John* 4. 4. Christ must needs go that way, (*i. e.*) it lay just in the Road betwixt *Judea* and *Galilee*, and at the sixth hour (*i. e.*) high Noon, he rests himself upon *Jacob*'s Well, still seeming to have no other design, but his own refreshment, by sitting and drinking there: But O what a Train of Blessed Providences follow this, which seemed but an accidental Thing! first the Woman of *Samaria*, and then many more in that City are brought to believe in *Christ*, as you find *Verse* 29. and 41.

Melch. Adams Vitæ Theol. Part 2. p. 194.

It is Noted by *Melchior Adams* in the Life of *Junius*, how very an *Atheist* he was grown in his younger Years; but in order to his Conversion to God, first, a wonderful Preservation of his Life in a publick Tumult at *Lyons* in *France* must make way, which forces from him the acknowledgment of a Deity. Then his Father sends for him home, and with much gentleness perswades him to read the Scriptures; he lights upon the *first* of *John*, and with it he sensibly feels a Divine Supernatural Majesty and Power seizing his Soul, which brought him over by a compleat Conversion to *Jesus Christ*. Thus, as the Woman of *Tekoa* told *David*, *doth God devise Means to bring back his Banished.*

Lavater tells us, that many *Spanish* Souldiers, going into the Wars of *Germany*, were there Converted to *Christ*, by falling into the *Cities* and *Towns*,

Towns, where Godly *Ministers* and Christians were.

Mr. *Robert Bolton*, though an excellent Scholar, yet in his younger Years he was a very irreligious Person, and a Jeerer of Holy Men; but being cast into the Company of Godly Mr. *Peacock*, was by him brought to Repentance, and proved a famous Instrument in the Church of Christ.

A scrap of Paper accidentally coming to View, hath been used as an occasion of Conversion. This was the Case of a Minister of *Wales*, who had two Livings, but took little care of either. He being at a *Fair*, bought something at a *Pedlers* Standing, and rent off a Leaf of Mr. *Perkin's* Catechism to wrap it in, and reading a line or two in it, God set it home, so as it did the Work. See *Firmin's Real Christian*, p. 119.

The Marriage of a Godly Man into a Carnal Family, hath ben ordered by Providence, for the Conversion and Salvation of many therein. Thus we read, in the Life of that Renowned *English* Worthy Mr. *John Bruen*, that in his second Match it was agreed, that he should have one Years Diet in his Mother-in-laws House: During his abode there that Year (saith Mr. *Clark*) the Lord was pleased by his Means, graciously to Work upon her Soul, as also upon his Wives Sister, and half Sister, their Brothers Mr. *William* and *Thomas Fox*, with one or two of the Servants in that Family.

The Reading of a good Book, hath been the Means of bringing others to Christ. And thus we find many of the *German* Divines Converted, by Reading *Luther's* Books: Yea, and what is more strange, Mr. *Sleyden* in his Commentary tells us, that *Vergerius*, though he were present an Eye and *Sleyden's Comment.* p. 476.

and Ear-witneſs to that doleful Caſe of *Spira*, which one would think ſhould move a Stone, yet ſtill continued ſo firm to the *Popes* Intereſt, that when he fell into ſome ſuſpicion among the *Cardinals*, he reſolved to purge himſelf, by writing a Book againſt the *German Apoſtates*: But whilſt he read the *Proteſtant* Books, out of no other Deſign, but to Confute them; whilſt he is weighing the Arguments, is himſelf Convinced and brought to *Chriſt*. He finding himſelf thus overcome by the Truth, imparts his Conviction to his *Brother*, a zealous *Papiſt* alſo: This *Brother* deplores the miſery of his Caſe, and ſeeks to reclaim him; but *Vergerius* entreating him to weigh well the *Proteſtant* Arguments, he alſo yields; and ſo both immediately betook themſelves to preach Juſtification by the Free Grace of God through the Blood of Chriſt.

Poſſidonius in vita Auguſtini cap. 15.

Yea, not only the reading of a Book, or hearing a Miniſter, but (which is moſt remarkable) the very miſtake or forgetfulneſs of a Miniſter, hath been improv'd by *Providence* for this End and Purpoſe. *Auguſtine* once Preaching to his Congregation, forgot the Argument which firſt he propos'd, and fell upon the Error of the *Manichees* beſide his firſt Intention: By which Diſcourſe he Converted one *Firmus* his *Auditor*; who fell down at his Feet weeping, and Confeſſing he had lived a *Manichee* many Years. Another I knew, who going to Preach, took up another *Bible* than that he deſign'd, in which, not only miſſing his *Notes*, but the *Chapter* alſo in which his *Text* lay, was put to ſome loſs thereby: But after a ſhort pauſe, he reſolv'd to ſpeak to any other Scripture that might be preſented to him, and accordingly read that Text, 2 *Pet.* 3. 9. *The Lord is not ſlack* con-

concerning his Promise, &c. And though he had nothing prepar'd; yet the Lord helpt him to speak both Methodically and pertinently from it: By which Discourse, a gracious Change was wrought upon one in the Congregation, who hath since given good Evidence of a sound Conversion, and acknowledged this Sermon to be the first and only Means thereof.

The accompanying of others in a Neighbourly civil Visit, hath been over-rul'd to the same End. Thus many of the *Jews* accompanied *Mary* unto *Bethany*, (designing only to manifest their civil Respect) but there they met Christ, saw the Things which he did, and believed on him,' *John* 11. 45.

Mr. *Firmin* in his *Real Christian*, Page 97, 98. tells us of one, who had liv'd many Years in a *Town* where *Christ* had been as clearly, and as long Preached, as in any *Town* in *England*. This Man when he was about seventy six Years of Age, went to visit a sick Neighbour. "A Christian "Friend of mine (saith mine Author) came to "see him also, and finding this Old Man there; "whom he judged to be one that lived upon his "own Stock: Civility, good Works, *&c.* he "purposely fell into that Discourse, to shew how "many Persons lived upon their Duties, but ne-"ver came to *Christ*. The Old Man sitting by "the Bed side, heard him; and God was pleased "to convince him, that he was such a Person, "who had lived upon himself without Christ to "that Day; and would say afterwards, had I "Dyed before threescore and sixteen, I had pe-"risht, for I knew not Christ.

The committing of a Godly Man to *Prison*, hath been the Method of Providence, to save the Soul

Soul of a Poor Keeper. So *Paul*, *Acts* 16. 27 was made a *Priſoner*, to make his Keeper a ſpiritual *Free-man*. The like ſucceſs had Dr. *Barns* in Queen *Mary*'s Days, who afterwards celebrated the *Lords Supper* in Priſon with his Converted Keeper.

The ſcattering of *Miniſters* and *Chriſtians* by Perſecution from *Cities* and *Towns*, into the ignorant and barbarous Parts of the Countrey, hath been the way of Providence, to find out, and bring home ſome loſt Sheep that were found there, to Jeſus Chriſt, *Acts* 8. 1, 4. The like ſignal Event hath ſince followed upon the like ſcattering of Godly *Miniſters*, whereof are many pregnant Inſtances at this Day.

A *Servant* running away from his Maſter, (likely upon no other Deſign but to live an idle Life) yet falling into ſuch Places and Companies, as Providence ordered (in a Deſign to him unknown) hath thereby been brought to be the Servant of *Chriſt*. This was the very Caſe of *Oneſimus*, who run away from his Maſter *Philemon*, to *Rome*; where by a ſtrange Providence (poſſibly a meer curioſity to ſee the Priſoners) he there falls into *Paul*'s Hands, who begat him to Chriſt in his Bonds, *Philemon*, *ver.* 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

Going to hear a Sermon in Jeſt, hath proved ſome Mens Converſion in Earneſt. The above named Mr. *Firmin** in the fore-cited Book, tells us of a notorious *Drunkard*, whom the Drunkards called *Father*, that one Day would needs go to hear what *Wilſon* ſaid, out of no other Deſign it ſeems, but to ſcoff at that Holy Man: But in the Prayer before Sermon, his Heart began to thaw; and when he read his Text, which was *John* 5. 14. *Sin no more, leſt a worſe*

*Page 76. 77.**

Thing

Thing come unto thee: He could not contain; and in that Sermon the Lord changed his Heart, though so bitter an Enemy, that the Minister on Lecture-days was afraid to go to Church before his Shop-door. *Lo, these are Parts of his ways, but how small a Portion is known of him?*

The dropping of some grave and weighty Word accidentally in the presence of vain carnal Persons, the Death of an Husband, Wife or Child, a fit of Sickness, with a thousand other such like occasions, have been thus improved by Providence to the Conversion of Souls.

And no less remarkable and wonderful are the Designs of Providence in ordering the *Removes*, and governing the *Motions* of Ministers, from Place to Place in order unto the Conversion of Souls. Thus oftentimes it carries them to Places where they intended not to go; God having (unknown to them) some Elect Vessels there, who must be Called by the Gospel.

Thus *Paul* and *Timothy* (a sweet and lovely Pair) when they were Travelling through *Phrygia* and *Galatia*, were forbid to Preach the Word in *Asia*, to which probably their Minds inclined, *Acts* 16. 6. And when they essayed to go into *Bythinia*, the Spirit suffered them not, *Verse* 7. But a Man of *Macedonia* (*i. e.* an *Angel* in the shape or habit of a Man of that *Country*) appeared to *Paul* in a Vision, and prayed him, saying, *Come over into* Macedonia, *and help us*, ver. 9. and there did God open the Heart of *Lydia*.

I knew a pious *Minister* now with God, who falling in his Study upon a very rouzing subject, intended for his own Congregation, was strongly moved, when he had finished it, to go to a rude, vile, prophane People, about five Miles off, and first

firſt Preach it to them; after many wreſtlings with himſelf, not being willing to quench any Motion that might be ſuppoſed to come from the Spirit of God, he obeyed, and went to this People, who had then no Miniſter of their own, and few durſt come among them. And there did the Lord, beyond all Expectation, open a door, and ſeveral prophane ones received *Chriſt* in that Place, and engaged this *Miniſter* to a Weekly Lecture among them, in which many Souls were won to God.

The ſame Holy Man, at another time, being upon a Journey, paſſed by a Company of vain Perſons, who were wreſtling upon a *Green* near the Road: And juſt as he came againſt the Place, one of them had thrown his *Antagoniſt*, and ſtood Triumphing in his Strength and Activity. This good Man rode up to them, and turning his Speech to this Perſon; told him, Friend, I ſee you are a ſtrong Man; but yet let not the ſtrong Man Glory in his Strength: You muſt know, that you are not to wreſtle with Fleſh and Blood, but with Principalities and Powers, and Spiritual Wickedneſſes: How ſad will it be, that *Satan* ſhould at laſt trip up the Heels of your Hope, and give you an Eternal overthrow? And after about a quarter of an Hours ſerious Diſcourſe upon this Subject, he left them, and went on his Journey; but this Diſcourſe made ſuch an Impreſſion, that the Perſon had no reſt, till he opened his trouble to a Godly Miniſter, who wiſely following the Work upon his Soul, ſaw at laſt the bleſſed Iſſue thereof in the gracious Change of the Perſon, whereof he afterwards gave the *Miniſter* a joyful Account. O how unſearchable are the Methods of Providence in this Matter?

Nay,

Nay, what is yet more wonderful, the Providence of God hath sometimes ordered the very malice of *Satan*, and wickedness of men, as an occasion of Eternal good to their souls. A very memorable Example whereof, I shall here give the Reader, faithfully relating what not many years past fell out in my own observation in this place, to the astonishment of many spectators.

In the year 1673. there came in this *Port* a Ship of *Poole*, in her return from *Virginia*; in which Ship was one of that place, a lusty young man of twenty three years of age, who was *Chirurgeon* in the Ship. This person in the voyage fell into a deep melancholy, which the *Devil* greatly improved to serve his own design for the ruine of this poor man; however, it pleased the Lord to restrain him from any attempts upon his own life, until he arrived here. But shortly after his arrival, upon the Lords Day early in the morning (being in bed with his Brother) he took a knife prepared for that purpose, and cut his own throat, and withal leapt out of the bed, and though the wound was deep and large, yet thinking it might not soon enough dispatch his wretched life, desperately thrust it into his stomach, and so lay wallowing in his own blood, till his *Brother* awaking, made a cry for help: hereupon a *Physician* and a *Chirurgeon* coming in found the wound in his Throat mortal; and all they could do at present, was only to stitch it and apply a plaister, with design, rather to enable him to speak for a little while, than with any expectation of cure; for before that, he breathed through the wound, and his voice was inarticulate.

In this condition I found him that morning and apprehending him to be within a few minutes of Eternity, I laboured to work upon his heart the ſenſe of his condition, telling him, I had but little time to do any thing for him, and therefore deſired him to let me know, what his own apprehenſions of his preſent Condition were. He told me, he hoped in God for Eternal Life. I replyed, that I feared his hopes were ungrounded, for that the Scripture tells us, *No Murderer hath eternal life abiding in him*, but this was ſelf murther, the groſſeſt of all Murthers: and inſiſting upon the aggravation and heinouſneſs of the fact, I perceived his vain confidence began to fall, and ſome meltings of heart appeared in him. He then began to lament with many tears his ſin and miſery, and asked me, if there might yet be hope for one that had deſtroyed himſelf and ſhed his own blood. I replyed, the ſin indeed is great, but not unpardonable; and if the Lord gave him repentance unto life, and faith to apply *Jeſus Chriſt*, it ſhould be certainly pardoned to him: and finding him unacquainted with theſe things, I opened to him the nature and neceſſity of faith and repentance, which he greedily ſuckt in, and with great vehemency cryed to God, that he would work them upon his ſoul, and intreated me alſo to pray with him and for him, that it might be ſo. I prayed with him and the Lord thawed his heart exceedingly in that duty: loth he was to part with me; but the duties of the day neceſſitating me to leave him, I briefly ſummed up what was moſt neceſſary in my parting counſel to him, and took my leave, never expecting to ſee him more in this world. But

beyond

beyond my own and all mens expectation, he continued all that day, and panted most ardently after *Jesus Christ*: no discourses pleased him, but *Christ* and faith; and in this frame I found him in the evening. He rejoiced greatly to see me again, and intreated me to continue my discourses upon these subjects; and after all told me, Sir, the Lord hath given me repentance for this sin; yea, and for every other sin. I see the Evil of sin now, so as I never saw it before. O! I loath my self; I am a vile creature in my own eyes. I do also believe; *Lord help my unbelief.* I am heartily willing to take Christ upon his own terms. One thing only troubles me, I doubt this bloody sin will not be pardoned. Will Jesus Christ (said he) apply his blood to me, that have shed my own blood? I told him, Christ shed his blood even for them that with wicked hand had shed the blood of Christ; and that was a sin of deeper guilt than his. Well, (saith he) I will cast my self upon Christ; let him do by me what he will And so I parted with him that night.

Next Morning the wounds were to be opened; and then, the opinion of the *Chirurgeons* was, he would immediately expire.

Accordingly, at his desire, I came that morning and found him in a most serious frame. I prayed with him, and then the wound in his stomach was opened, but by this time the *Ventricle* it self was swoln out of the *orifice* of the wound, and lay like a livid discoloured *Tripe* upon his body, and was also cut through? so that all concluded, it was impossible for him to live? however they stitcht the wound in the stomach, enlarged the Orifice, and fomented it, and wrought

it again into his body, and ſo ſtiching up th skin, left him to the diſpoſe of Providence.

But ſo it was, that both the deep wound in hi throat, and this in his ſtomack healed: and th more dangerous wound *ſin* had made upon h *ſoul*, was, I truſt, effectually healed alſo. I ſpen many hours with him in that ſickneſs; and aft his return home, received this account fro Mr. *Samuel Hardy*, a Miniſter in that Town. Pa whereof I ſhall tranſcribe.

Dear Sir,

I Was much troubled at the ſad Providence your Town; but did much rejoice, that he fe into ſuch hands for his body and ſoul. You hav taken much pains with him, and I hope to good pu poſe. I think, if ever a great and through work wa done ſuch a way, *it is now; and if never the like, am perſwaded now it is. Never grow weary ſuch good works. One ſuch Inſtance is (methinks enough to make you to abound in the work of the Lo all your days*, &c.

O how unſearchable are the ways of Provi dence, in leading men to Chriſt! Let none b encouraged by this to ſin, that grace may abound Theſe are rare and ſingular Inſtances of th mercy of God, and ſuch as no preſumptuous ſin ner can expect to find. It's only recited here, t the honour of Providence, which works for th recovery of ſinners in ways that we underſtan not. O what a fetch hath Providence beyon our Underſtandings!

2. And as it orders very ſtrange occaſions t awaken and rouſe ſouls at firſt, ſo it works no le

wonderfully in carrying on the work to perfection; and this it doth two ways.

(1.) By quickning and reviving dying convictions and troubles for sin. Souls after their first awakening, are apt to lose the sense and impression of their first troubles for sin; but Providence is vigilant to prevent it; and doth effectually prevent it sometimes, by *directing the Minister* to some discourse or passage, that shall fall as pat, as if the case of such a person had been studied by him, and designedly spoken to. How often have I found this in the cases of many souls, who have professed they have stood amazed, to hear the very thoughts of their hearts discovered by the Preacher, who knew nothing of them! Sometimes by directing them to some proper rousing Scripture, that suites their present case. And sometimes by suffering them to fall into some new sin, which shall awaken all their former troubles again, and put a new efficacy and activity into the Conscience. The world is full of Instances in all these cases, and because most Christians have experience of these things in themselves, it will be needless to recite them here. Search but a few years back, and you may remember, that according to this Account (at least, in some particulars) Providence ordered the matter with you. Have you not found some rod or other prepared by Providence, to rouze you out of your security? Why, this is so common a thing with Christians, that they many times presage an affliction coming from the frames they find their own hearts in.

(2.) It gives also great assistance to the work of the Spirit upon the soul, by ordering, supporting;

relieving and cheering means, to prop up and comfort the ſoul, when it is over-burthened, and ready to ſink in the deeps of troubles. I remember Mr. *Bolton* gives us one Inſtance, which fits both theſe caſes, the *reviving of convictions*, and *ſeaſonable ſupports in the deeps of troubles*. And it is of a perſon that by convictions had been fetcht off from his wicked companions, and entered into a reformed courſe of life; but after this, through the inticement of his old companions, the ſubtilty of Satan, and corruption of his own heart, did again relapſe into the wayes of ſin. Then was Providentially brought to his view that Scripture, *Prov.* 1. 24, 25, 26, *&c.* this renewed his trouble? yea, aggravated it to a greater height than ever; inſomuch that he could ſcarcely think (as it ſeems by the relation) his ſin could be pardoned. But in this plunge, that Text *Luke* 17. 4. was preſented to him, which ſweetly ſetled him in a ſure and glorious peace.

Nor can we here forget that miraculous work of Providence, in a time of great extremity, which was wrought for that good *Gentlewoman* Mrs. *Honeywood*, (and is ſomewhere mentioned by the ſame Author) who under a deep and ſad deſertion, refuſed and put off all comfort, ſeeming to diſpair utterly of the grace and mercy of God. A worthy Miniſter being one day with her, and reaſoning againſt her deſperate concluſions, ſhe took a *Venice-glaſs* from the Table, and ſaid, Sir, I am as ſure to be damned, as this glaſs is to be broken; and therewith threw it forcibly to the ground; but to the aſtoniſhment of both, the glaſs remained whole and ſound, which the Miniſter

Minister taking up with admiration, rebuked her presumption, and shewed her what a wonder Providence had wrought for her satisfaction, and it greatly altered the temper of her mind. O how unsearchable are his wayes! and his paths past finding out! Lo, these are part of wayes; but how small a portion do we know of him? Job

And now suffer me to expostulate a little with thy soul Reader, hast thou been duly sensible of thy obligation to Providence, for this inestimable favour? O what hath it done for thee! there are divers kinds of mercies conveyed to men by the hand of Providence, but none like this: in all the Treasury of its benefits, none is found like this, Did it cast thee into the way of Conversion, and order the means and occasions of it for thee, when thou little thoughtest of any such thing? How dear and sweet, should the remembrance of it be to thy soul! Methinks it should astonish and melt you every time you reflect upon it. Such Mercies should never grow stale, or look like common things to you: for do but seriously consider the following particulars.

1. How *surprizing* the mercy was, which it performed for you in that day. Providence had a design upon you, for your eternal good, which you understood not. The time of mercy was now fully come; the Decree was now ready to bring forth that mercy, with which it had gone big from Eternity, and its gracious design must be executed by the hand of Providence, so far as concerned the external means and instruments: and how aptly did it cause all things to fall in with that design, though you knew not the mean-

ing of it (Look over all the before mentioned Examples, and you shall see the blessed work of Conversion begun upon those souls, when they minded it no more, than *Saul* did a Kingdom, that morning he went out to seek his *Fathers Asses*, 1 *Sam.* 9. 3, 20. Providence might truly have said to you in that day, as Christ said to *Peter*, John 13. 7. *What I do thou knowest not now, but hereafter thou shalt know it. Gods thoughts are not as our thoughts; but as the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are his thoughts higher than ours, and his ways than our ways.* Little did *Zacheus* think, when he climbed up into the *Sycamore*-tree to see *Christ* as he passed that way, what a design of mercy *Christ* had upon him, who took thence the occasion of becoming both his *Guest* and *Saviour*, Luke 19. 5, 6, 7, 8. And as little did some of you think, what the aim of Providence was when you went (some out of custom, others out of curiosity, if not worse ends) to hear such a Sermon. O how stupendious are the ways of God!

2. What a distinguishing and seasonable mercy was usher'd in by Providence in that day. It brought you to the means of salvation in a good hour. At that very nick of time, when the *Angel* troubled the Waters, you were brought to the *Pool*; to allude to that, *John* 5. 4. Now the accepted day was come, the *Spirit* was in the Ordinance, or Providence that converted you, and you were set in the way of it. It may be, you had heard many hundred Sermons before, but nothing would stick till now, because the hour was not come. The Lord did, as it were, call in the Word for such a man, such a woman; and Pro-

vidence said, Lord, here he is, I have brought him before thee. There were many others under that Sermon, that received no such mercy. You your selves had heard many before, but not to that advantage, as it is said, Luke 4. 27. *There were many Lepers in Israel in the days of Elizeus, but to none of them was the Prophet sent, save unto Naaman the Syrian.* So there were many poor unconverted souls beside you under the Word that day, and it may be, to none of them was salvation sent that day, but to you. O blessed Providence, that set you in the way of mercy at that time!

What a weighty and important mercy was Providentially directed to your souls that day. These are mercies or all sizes and kinds in the hands of Providence to dispense to the sons of men: its left hand is full of blessings, as well as its right. It hath health and riches, honours and pleasures, as well as Christ and Salvation to dispense. The world is full of its *left hand* favours; but the blessings of its *right hand* are invaluably precious, and few there be that receive them. It doth thousands of kind offices for men; but among them all, this is the chiefest, to lead and direct them to Christ. For consider,

(1.) Of all mercies, this comes through most and greatest difficulties, *Eph.* 1. 19, 20.

(2.) This is a spiritual mercy, excelling in dignity of nature all others, more than *gold* excels the *dirt* under your feet, *Rev.* 3. 18. One such gift, is worth thousands of other mercies.

(3.) This is a mercy immediately flowing out of the fountain of Gods *electing love*, a mercy never dropt into any, but an Elect Vessel, 1 *Thess.* 1. 4, 5. (4.) This

(4.) This is a mercy, that infallibly secur Salvation; for as we may argue from Converſion t Election, looking back, ſo from Converſion t Salvation, looking forward, *Heb.* 6 9.

(5.) Laſtly, This is an Eternal mercy, tha which will ſtick by you, when Father, Mother Wife, Children, Eſtate, Honours, Health and Lif ſhall fail thee, *John* 4. 14.

O therefore ſet a ſpecial Mark upon that Pro vidence, that ſet you in the way of this mercy It hath performed that for thee, which all th Miniſters on Earth, and Angels in Heaven coul never have performed. This is a Mercy, th puts weight and value into the ſmalleſt Circum ſtance that relates to it.

The Fifth Performance of Providence.

V.

Thus you hear, how inſtrumental Providenc hath been, in ordering the Means and Oc caſions of the greateſt Mercies for your ſouls. Le us now take into conſideration, another excel lent Performance of Providence reſpecting th good of your bodies and ſouls too, *in reſpect o that Imployment and Calling it hath ordered for yo in this world*; for it hath not only an Eye upon your well being in the *world to come*, but upon your well being in *this world* alſo, and that very much depends upon the Station and Vocation to which it calls you.

Providential Performances with reſpect to our Civil Calling.

Now the Providence of God with reſpect to our civil Callings, may be diſplayed very takingly in the following particulars.

1. In directing you to a Calling in your Youth,

and

and not suffering you to live an idle, useless and sinful life, as many do, who are but burthens to the Earth, *fruges consumere nati*, the Wens of the body politick, serving only to disfigure and drein it, to eat what others earn. Sin brought in sweat, *Gen.* 3. 19. but now, not to sweat in creaseth sin, 2 *Thess.* 3. 12. He that lives *idly*, cannot live *honestly*; as is plainly enough intimated, 1 *Thess.* 4. 11. 12. But when Gods puts men into a lawful Calling, wherein the labours of their hands or heads is sufficient for them, it is a very valuable mercy: for thereby they *eat their own bread*, 2 Thess. 3. 12. Many a sad Temptation is happily prevented; and they are ordinarily furnished by it, for works of mercy to others, and surely it is more blessed to give, than to receive.

2. In ordering you to such *Callings* and *Imployments* in the world, as are, not only *lawful* in themselves, but most *suitable* to you. There be many persons imployed in *sinful* Trades and Arts, meerly to furnish other mens lusts: they do not only sin in their Imployments; but their very Imployments are sinful: they trade for Hell, and are Factors for the Devil. *Demetrius* and the Crafts-men at *Ephesus*, got their Estates by makeing *Shrines* for *Diana*, Acts 19. 24, 25. (*i. e.*) little cases, or boxes with folding leaves, within which the *Image* of that *Idol* sate enshrined. These were carried about by the People in Procession, in honour of their Idol. And at this day, how many wicked Arts and Imployments are there invented, (and multitudes of persons maintained by them) meerly to gratifie the pride and wantonness of a debauched age?

Now

Now to have an honeſt lawful imployment wherein you do not diſhonour God in benefiting your ſelves, is no ſmall mercy.

But if it be not only lawful in it ſelf, but ſuited to your *genius* and ſtrength, there is a double mercy in it. Some poor Creatures are engaged in Callings, that eat up their time and ſtrength, and make their lives very uncomfortable to them: they have not only *ſpending* and waſting Imployments in the world; but ſuch as allow them little or no time for their *general Calling*: and yet all this doth but keep them and theirs alive. Oh therefore, if God have fitted you with an honeſt Imployment, wherein you have leſs toil than others, and more time for Heavenly Exerciſes, aſcribe this benefit to the ſpecial care of Providence for you.

3. In ſetling you in ſuch an *Imployment* and Calling in the world, as poſſibly neither your ſelves nor *Parents* could ever expect you ſhould arrive to. There are among us ſuch perſons, as on this account are ſignally obliged to Divine Providence. God hath put them into ſuch a way, as neither they nor their Parents ever projected. For, look as the *Flower-de-luce* in the Compaſs, turns now this way, then that way, and never ceaſes moving, till it ſettle to the *North-point*; juſt ſo it is in our ſetlement in the world. A Child is now deſigned for this, then for that, but at laſt ſetles in that way of Imployment which Providence deſigned him to. How ſtrangely are things wheeled about by Providence! not what we, or our Parents, but what God deſigned ſhall take place. *Amos* was very meanly employed at firſt, but God deſigned him for a more honourable

ble and comfortable Calling, *Amos* 7. 14, 15, *David* followed the Ewes, and likely never raised his thoughts to higher things in the days of his youth; but God made him the Royal Shepherd of a better flock, *Psalm* 78. 70, 71. *Peter* and *Andrew* were imployed as Fisher-men, but *Christ* calls them from that to an higher Calling *Matth.* 4. 18, 19. to be fishers of men. *Pareus* when he was fourteen years old, was by the instigation of his *Step-mother*, placed with an *Apothecary*; but Providence so wrought, that he was taken off from that, and fitted for the Ministry; wherein he became a fruitful and eminent Instrument to the Church. *James Andreas* was by reason of his Fathers inability to keep him at School, designed for a *Carpenter*; but was afterwards by the perswasion of friends, and assistance of the Church-stock sent to *Stutgard*, and thence to the University, and so arrived to a very eminent station of service to the Church. A master builder *Oecolampadius*, was by his *Father* designed for a *Merchant*; but his *Mother* by earnest entreaties, prevailed to keep him at School: and this Man was a blessed Instrument in the reformation of Religion. I might easily cite multitudes of such Instances; but a taste may suffice.

4 In securing your Estates from ruine, Job 1. 10. *Hast thou not made an hedge about him, and all that he hath?* This is the Enclosure of Providence, which secures to us, what by its favour we acquire in the way of honest industry.

5. In making your Calling sufficient for you. It was the prayer of *Moses* for the Tribe of *Judah*, Exod. 33. 7. *Let his hands be sufficient for him*; and it is no small mercy, if yours be so to you

Some

Some there be that have work, but not ſtrengt to go through with it; others have ſtrength, b no imployment for it. Some have hands, a work for them; but it's not ſufficient for the and theirs. If God bleſs your labours, ſo as t give you and yours neceſſary ſupports and com fort in the world by it, it's a choice Providenc and with all thankfulneſs to be acknowledged.

Object. 1. If any that fear God ſhall complain, *That a though they have a Calling, yet it is an hard labor ous one, which takes up too much of their time, whic they would gladly imploy in other, and better wor* I anſwer,

Sol. (1.) It's like, the Wiſdom of Providence foreſa this to be the moſt ſuitable and proper Imploy ment for you; and if you had more eaſe and re you might have more temptations than now yo have: the ſtrength and time which is now take up in your daily labours, wherein you ſerve God might otherways have been ſpent upon ſuc luſts wherein you might have ſerved the Devil.

(2.) Hereby it may be, your health is th better preſerved, and natural refreſhments mad the ſweeter to you, Eccleſ. 5. 12. *The ſleep of labouring man is ſweet to him, whether he eat litt or much: but the abundance of the rich, will not ſuffe him to ſleep.*

(3.) And as to the ſervice of God, if you hearts be ſpiritual, you may enjoy much Com munion with God in your very Imployments, and you have ſome intervals and reſpits for that pur poſe. Have you not more ſpare hours, than yo imploy to that end?

But all my labours will scarcely suffice, to procure me and mine the Necessaries of life. I am kept short and low to what others are; and this is a sad affliction. Object. 2.

Though the Wisdom of Pravidence hath ordered you a lower, and poorer condition than others, yet (1.) Consider how many there be that are lower than you in the world: you have but little of the world, yet others have less. Read the description of those persons, *Job* 30. 4, &c. (2.) If God have given you but a small portion of the world; yet if you be godly, he hath promised never to forsake you, *Heb.* 13. 5. (3.) Providence hath ordered that condition for you, which is really best for your eternal good. If you had more of the world than you have, your heads and hearts might not be able to manage it to your advantage. A small *Boat* must have but a narrow *Sail.* You have not wanted hitherto the necessaries of life, and are commanded, *having food and rayment* (though none of the finest) *to be therewith content. A little that arighteous man hath, is better than the riches of many wicked,* Psal. 37. 16. better in the *Acquisition*, sweeter in the *Fruition*, and more comfortable in the *Account.* Sol.

Well then, if Providence hath so disposed of you all, that you can eat your own bread, and so advantagiously directed some of you to imployments, that afford not only necessaries for your selves and families, but an over-plus for works of mercy to others, and all this brought about for you in a way you did not project; let God be owned, and honoured in this Providence.

Will

Will you not henceforth call him, *My Father, the Guide of my youth*? as it is *Jer.* 3. 4. Surely, it was the Lord that guided you to ſetle as you did in thoſe days of your youth: You reap at this day, and may to your laſt day, the fruits of thoſe early Providences in your youth.

Now ſee that you walk anſwerable to the obligations of Providence in this particular; and ſee to it in the fear of God, that you abuſe not any of thoſe things to *his diſhonour*, which he hath wrought for *your comfort*. To prevent which, I will here drop a few needful Cautions, and ſhut up this particular.

1. *Caution.* Be not ſlothful and idle in your *Vocations*. It's ſaid, *Auguſtus* built an *Apragapolis*, a City void of buſineſs; but I am ſure God never erected any City, Town or Family to that end. The Command to *Adam*, *Gen.* 3 19. no doubt reaches all his poſterity: and Goſpel-Commands back and ſecond it upon Chriſtians, *Rom.* 12. 11. and 1 *Theſſ.* 4. 11. If you be negligent, you cannot be innocent. And yet,

2. *Caution.* Be not ſo intent upon your *particular* Callings, as to make them interfere with your *general* Calling. Beware you loſe not your God in the Crowd and hurry of Earthly buſineſs. Mind that ſolemn warning, 1 Tim. 6. 9. *But they that will be rich fall into Temptation, and a ſnare, and into many fooliſh and hurtful luſts, which drown men in deſtruction and perdition.* The inhabitants of *OEnoe*, a dry Iſland near *Athens*, beſtowed much labour to draw in a River to water it, and make it fruitful; but when the Sluces were opened, the waters flowed ſo abundantly, that it overflowed the

the Island, and drowned the Inhabitants. The Application is obvious. It was an excellent saying of *Seneca*, *rebus non me trado, sed commodo.* I don't give, but lend my self to business.

Remember always, the success of your Callings and earthly Imployments is by Divine Blessing, not humane Diligence alone, *Deut.* 8. 18. *Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God; for it is he that giveth thee Power to get Wealth.* The Devil himself was so far Orthodox, as to acknowledge it, *Job* 1. 10. *Hast not Thou made an Hedge about him, and about his House, and about all that he hath on every side? Thou hast blessed the Work of his Hands*, &c. Recommend therefore your Affairs to God by Prayer, according to *Psalm* 37. 4, 5. *Delight thy self also in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thine Heart. Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass.* And touch not with that which you cannot recommend to God by Prayer for a Blessing. 3. *Caution.*

Be well satisfied in that Station and Imployment in which Providence hath placed you, and do not so much as wish your selves in another, 1 *Cor.* 7. 20. *Let every Man abide in the same Calling, wherein he was called.* Providence is wiser than you, and you may be confident hath suited all things better to your Eternal Good, than you could do, had you been left to your own Option. 4. *Caution.*

The Sixth Performance of Providence.

VI.

Thus you see, the Care Providence hath had over you in your Youth, in respect of that

Civil Imployment to which it guided us in those Days.

Providential Performances with respect to our Civil Relations.

We will in the next Place consider it *as our Guide, and the Orderer of our Relations for us.* That Providence hath a special Hand in this Matter, is evident both from Scripture Assertions, and the acknowledgments of Holy Men, who in that great Concernment of their Lives, have still owned, and acknowledged the directing Hand of Providence. Take an Instance of both. The Scripture plainly asserts the Dominion of Providence over this Affair in *Prov.* 19. 14. *A prudent Wife is from the Lord:* And *Prov.* 18. 22. *Whoso findeth a Wife, findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.* So for Children, see *Psalm* 127. 3. *Lo, Children are an Heritage of the Lord; and the Fruit of the Womb is his Reward.*

And it hath ever been the Practice of Holy Men, to seek the Lord for Direction and Counsel, when they have been upon the Change of their Condition. No doubt but *Abraham*'s encouragement in that Case was the Fruit of Prayer, *Gen.* 24. 7. His Pious Servant also, who was imployed in that Affair, did both earnestly seek Counsel of God, *Gen.* 24. 12. and thankfully acknowledge his gracious Providence in guiding it, *Ver.* 26, 27.

The same we may observe in Children, the Fruit of Marriage, 1 *Sam.* 1. 20. *Luke* 1. 13, 14. Now the Providence of God may be divers ways displayed for the engaging of our Hearts in Love to the God of our Mercies.

(1.) There is very much of Providence seen in appointing the Parties each for other. In this the Lord goes oftentimes beyond our Thoughts and Projections; yea, and oftentimes crosses Mens

Mens desires and designs to their great advantage. Not what they fancy; but what his Infinite Wisdom judges best, and most beneficial for them takes place. Hence it is, that probabilities are so often dashed; and things remote and utterly improbable are brought about, in very strange and unaccountable Methods of Providence.

(2.) There is much of Providence seen in the harmony and agreeableness of tempers and Dispositions; from whence a very great part of the tranquility and comforts of our Lives results: Or at least, though natural Tempers and Educations did not so much harmonize before, yet they do so after they come under the Ordinance of God, *Gen.* 2. 24. *They two shall be one Flesh*, not one only in respect of Gods *Institution*, but one in respect of Love and *Affection*, that those who so lately were meer strangers to each other, are now endeared to a degree beyond the neareſt Relations in Blood. *Ubi supra*, *For this cause shall a Man leave Father and Mother, and shall cleave to his Wife, and they two shall be one Flesh.*

(3.) But especially, Providence is remarkable, in making one Instrumental to the Eternal Good of the other, 1 *Cor.* 7. 16. *How knowest thou, O Wife, but thou maist save thy Husband? Or how knowest thou, O Man, whether thou shalt save thy Wife?* Hence is that grave Exhortation to the Wives of unbelieving Husbands, 1 *Pet.* 3. 1. to win them by their Conversation, which should be to them in stead of an Ordinance.

Or if both be gracious, then what singular assistance and mutual help is hereby gained to the furtherance of their Eternal Good? Whilst they live together *as Heirs of the Grace of Life*, 1 Pet. 3. 7. O blessed Providence! that directed such

into ſo intimate Relation on Earth, who ſhall inherit together the *common Salvation* in Heaven!

(4.) How much of Providence is ſeen in *Children* the Fruit of *Marriage?* To have any Poſterity in the Earth, and not be left altogether a dry Tree: To have Comfort and Joy in them is a ſpecial Providence, importing a ſpecial Mercy to us. To have the breaches made upon our Families repaired, is a Providence to be owned with a thankful Heart. When God ſhall ſay to Man, as he ſpeaks in another Caſe to the *Church* Iſa. 49. 20. *The Children which thou ſhalt have after thou haſt left the other, ſhall ſay again in thine Ears the Place is too ſtrait for me,* &c.

And theſe Providences will appear more affectingly ſweet and lovely to you, if you but compare its allotments to you, with what it hath allotted to many others in the World. For do but look abroad, and you ſhall find,

(1.) Multitudes unequally yoked, to the imbittering of their Lives, whoſe Relations are clogs and hinderances both in Temporals and Spirituals. Yea, we find an account in Scripture of gracious Perſons, a great part of whoſe Comfort in this World hath been ſplit upon this Rock. *Abigal* was a *diſcreet* and *vertuous* Woman, but very unſuitably matched to a *churliſh Nabal*, ſee 1 *Sam.* 25. 25. What a Temptation to the neglect of a known Duty, prevail'd upon the Renowned *Moſes*, by the Means of *Zipporah* his Wife? *Exod.* 4. 24, 25. *David* had his ſcoffing *Michal*, 2 *Sam.* 6. 20. And patient *Job* no ſmall Addition to all his other Afflictions, from the *Wife* of his Boſom, who ſhould have been a ſupport to him in the Day of his Trouble, *Job* 19. 17.

No

No doubt, but God ſanctifies ſuch Rods to his Peoples Good. If *Socrates* knew how to improve his Affliction in his *Zantippe*, to the increaſe of his Patience; much more will they who converſe with God under all Providences, whether ſweet or bitter. Nevertheleſs this muſt be acknowledged to be a ſad ſtroke upon any Perſon, and ſuch as maims them upon the working Hand, by unfitting them for Duty, 1 *Pet.* 3. 7. and cuts off much of the Comfort of Life alſo.

(2.) How many are there, who never enjoy the comfortable Fruits of Marriage? But are denyed the ſight, at leaſt, the enjoyment of Children, *Jer.* 22. 30. *Thus ſaith the Lord, write this Man Childleſs*, &c. or if they have Children, yet cannot enjoy them, *Hoſea* 9. 12. *Though they bring up Children, yet will I bereave them, that there ſhall not be a Man left*; who only bear for the Grave, and have their Expectations raiſed for a greater Affliction to themſelves.

(3) And it is no rare or unuſual Thing to ſee Children and near Relations the greateſt Inſtruments of Affliction to their Parents and Friends: So that after all their other Sorrows and Troubles in the World, neareſt Relations bring up the Rear of Sorrows (as One ſpeaks) and prove greater griefs than any other. O how many *Parents* have complained with the Tree in the Fable, that their very Hearts have been rived aſunder with thoſe Wedges that were cut out of their own Bodies? What a grief was *Eſau* to *Iſaac* and *Rebecka?* Gen. 26. 34, 35. What a ſcourge were *Abſalom* and *Amnon* to *David*?

Mr. *T. C.* in his *Iſagoge.*

Well then, if God have ſet *the ſolitary in Families*, as it is *Pſalm* 68. 6. Built an Houſe for the deſolate, given you comfortable Relations, which

are ſprings of daily Comfort and Refreſhment to you, you are upon many accounts engaged to walk anſwerably to theſe gracious Providences. And that you may underſtand wherein that *decorum* and agreeable Comportment with theſe Providences conſiſts, take up the Senſe of your Duty in theſe brief hints.

(1.) Aſcribe to God the Glory of all thoſe Providential works which yield you comfort. You ſee a wiſe, directing, governing Providence, which hath diſpoſed and ordered all things beyond your own Projections and Deſigns. *The way of Man is not in himſelf, nor is it in him that walketh to direct his own ſteps*, Jer. 10. 23. Not what you projected, but what an higher counſel than your determined, is come to paſs. Good *Jacob* when God had made him the Father of a Family, admired God in the Mercy, Gen. 32. 10. *With my ſtaff* (ſaid he) *I paſſed over this Jordan, and now I am become two Bands.* And how doth this Mercy humble and melt him? *I am not worthy of the leaſt of all the Mercies, and of all the Truth, which thou haſt ſhewed unto thy Servant.*

Be exact in diſcharging the Duties of thoſe Relations which ſo gracious a Providence hath led you into. Abuſe not the effects of ſo much Mercy and Love to you. The Lord expects Praiſe where ever you have Comfort. This aggravated *David*'s Sin, that he ſhould dare to abuſe ſo great Love and Mercy, as God had ſhewn him in his Family Relations, 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9.

3 Improve Relations to the end Providence deſigned them. Walk together as Co-heirs of the Grace of Life: Study to be mutual Bleſſings to each other: So walk in your Relations, that the parting Day may be ſweet. Death will ſhortly

break

break up the Family; and then nothing but the Sense of Duty Discharged, or the neglects Pardoned, will give Comfort.

The Seventh Performance of Providence.

VII.

You have heard how well Providence hath performed its Part for you, in planting you into Families, who once were solitary. Now let us in the next Place view another gracious Performance of Providence for us, *in making Provision from Time to Time for us and our Families.* I the rather put these Providences together in this Place, because I find the Scripture doth so, *Psalm* 107. 41. *He setteth the Poor on high from Affliction, and maketh him Families like a Flock.* Providential Prosion for us and ours.

You know the Promises God hath made to his People, *Psalm* 34. 10. *The young Lions shall lack, and suffer hunger; but they that seek the Lord, shall not want any good thing.* And have you not also seen the constant performance of it? Cannot you give the same answer, if the same question were propounded to you that the Disciples did, *Luke* 22. 35. *Since I sent you forth, lacked ye any thing? and they said, nothing.* Can ye not with *Jacob*, call him, *the God that fed you all your Life long?* Gen. 48. 15. Surely *he hath given Bread to them that fear him, and been ever mindful of his Covenant*, Psalm 111. 5.

To display this Providence, we will consider it in the following Particulars.

(1.) The *assiduity* and *constancy* of the Care of Providence for the Saints, *Lam.* 3. 23. *His Mercies are new every Morning.* It is not the supply of one or two pressing needs, but all your wants, as

they grow from day to day through all your Days, *Gen.* 48. 15. *The God that fed me all my Life long.* The Care of Providence runs parallel with the line of Life. See *Isa.* 46. 3, 4 *Hearken unto me, O House of Jacob, and all the remnant of the House of Israel, which are born by me from the Belly, which are carryed from the Womb: And even to your old Age I am he, and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear, even I will carry, and will deliver you.* So that as God bid *Israel*, Micah 6. 5. *To remember from Shittim unto Gilgal, that they might know the faithfulness of the Lord*; so would I perswade thee, Reader, to record the ways of Providence, from first to last, throughout thy whole course to this Day, that thou maist see what a God he hath been to thee.

(2.) The seasonableness, and opportuneness of its Provisions for them: For so runs the Promise, *Isa.* 41. 17. *When the Poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their Tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Israel will not forsake them*; and so hath the Performance of it been. And this hath been made good to distressed Saints sometimes in a more *ordinary way*, God secretly Blessing a little, and making it sufficient for us and ours: *Job* tells us of *the secret of God upon his Tabernacle*, Job 29. 4. (*i. e.*) his secret Blessing is in their *Tabernacles*; by Reason whereof it is that that they subsist; but it is in an unaccountable way that they do so. And sometimes in an *extraordinary* way it breaks forth for their supply. So you find in 2 *Kings* 17. 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14. The Cruse and Barrel fail not.

Clark's Lives, Vol. 1. *p.* 342.

Mr. *Samuel Clarke*, in the Life of that painful and humble Servant of Christ Mr. *John Fox*, records

cords a memorable Instance of Providence, and it is this, That towards the end of King *Henry* the Eighth his Reign he went to *London*, where he quickly spent that little his Friends had given him, or he had acquired by his own Diligence, and began to be in great want. As one Day he sate in *Paul's Church*, spent with long Fasting, his Countenance thin, and his Eyes hollow, after the ghastly Manner of Dying Men, every one shunning a Spectacle of so much horror: There came one to him, whom he had never seen before, and thrust an untold summ of Money into his Hand, bidding him, be of good Cheer, and accept that small Gift in good part from his Countrey-man; and that he should make much of himself, for that within a few Days new hopes were at Hand, and a more certain Condition of Livelihood. Three Days after the *Dutchess* of *Richmond* sent for him to live in her House, and be *Tutor* to the *Earl* of *Surrey*'s Children, then under her Care.

Mr. *Isaac Ambrose* a worthy Divine, whose labours have made him acceptable to his Generation, in his Epistle to the *Earl of Bedford* prefixed to his *Last Things*, gives a pregnant Instance in his own Case; his Words are these; *For mine own Part* (saith he) *however the Lord hath seen Cause to give me but a Poor pittance of outward Things, for which I bless his name; yet in the income thereof, I have many times observed so much of his peculiar Providence, that thereby they have been very much sweetned, and my Heart hath been raised to admire his Grace. When of late under an hard Dispensation (which I judge not meet to mention) wherein I suffered conscientiously all Streams of wonted Supplies being stopt, the Waters of Relief for my*

self

ſelf and Family did run low: I went to Bed with ſome ſtaggerings and doubtings of the Fountains letting out it ſelf for our refreſhing; but e're I did awake in the Morning, a Letter was brought to my Bed-ſide, which was Signed by a choice Friend Mr. Anthony Aſh, *which reported ſome unexpected breakings out of Gods Goodneſs for my Comfort. Theſe are ſome of his Lines* ——*Your God who hath given you an heart thankfully to Record your Experiences of his Goodneſs, doth renew Experiences for your Encouragement. Now I ſhall Report one, which will raiſe your Spirit toward the God of your Mercies.* Whereupon he ſweetly concludes, *One Morſel of Gods Proviſion, eſpecially when it comes in unexpected, and upon Prayer, when wants are moſt, will be more ſweet to ſpiritual reliſh, than all former Enjoyments were.*

(3.) The Wiſdom of Providence in our Proviſions. And this is diſcovered in two Things: (1.) In proportioning the quantity, not ſatisfying our extravagant *wiſhes*, but anſwering our real *needs*; conſulting our *wants*, not our *wantonneſs*, Phil. 4. 19. *My God ſhall ſupply all your wants*; and this hath exactly ſuited the wiſhes of the beſt and wiſeſt Men, who deſired no more at its hand. So *Jacob*, *Gen.* 28. 20. and *Agur*, *Prov.* 30. 8, 9. Wiſe Providence conſiders our Condition as *Pilgrims* and *Strangers*, and ſo allots the *Viaticum* Proviſion, that is needful for our Paſſage home. It knows the miſchievous influence of fulneſs and redundancy upon moſt Men, though ſanctified; and how apt it is to make them remiſs, and forgetful of God, *Deut.* 6. 12. That their Hearts, like the *Moon*, ſuffers an Eclipſe when it is at the full; and ſo ſuits and orders all to their beſt advantage. (2.) Its Wiſdom is much diſcovered in the

the manner of dispensing our Portion to us. It many times suffers our wants to pinch hard, and many Fears to arise, out of design to magnifie the Care and Love of God in the supply, *Deut.* 8. 3. Providence so orders the Case, that Faith and Prayer coming betwixt our wants and supplies, the Goodness of God may be the more magnified in our Eyes thereby.

And now let me beg you to consider the good Hand of Providence, that hath provided for, and suitably supplyed you and yours all your Days, and never failed you hitherto: And labour to walk suitably to your Experiences of such Mercies. In order whereunto, let me press a few suitable Cautions upon you.

1. Beware, that you forget not the Care and kindness of Providence which your Eyes have seen in so many Fruits and Experiences thereof. It was Gods charge against *Israel*, *Psal.* 106. 3. *That they soon forgat his wondrous Works.* A bad Heart and a slippery Memory, deprieve Men of the Comfort of many Mercies, and defraud God of the Glory due for them.

2. Do not distrust Providence in future exigencies. Thus they did, *Psalm* 78. 20. *Behold, he smote the Rock, that the Waters gushed out, and the Streams overflowed: can he give Bread also? can he provide flesh for his People?* How unreasonable and absurd are these queries of unbelief, especially after their Eyes had seen the Power of God in such extraordinary Effects?

3. Do not murmur and regret under new straits. This is a vile temper; and yet how incident to us, when wants press hard upon us! Ah! did we but rightly understand what the demerit of Sin is, we would rather admire the bounty of God, than com-

complain of the ſtrait-handedneſs of Providence. And if we did but conſider, that there lyes upon God no obligation of Juſtice or Gratitude to reward any of our Duties, it would cure our murmurs, *Gen.* 32. 20.

4. Do not ſhew the leaſt Diſcontent at the Lot and Portion Providence Carves out to you. O that you would be well pleaſed and ſatisfied with all its appointments. Say a *Pſal.* 16. 6. *The lines are fallen unto me in pleaſant Places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.* Surely that is beſt for you, which Providence hath appointed, and one Day you your ſelves will judge it ſo to be.

5. Do not neglect Prayer when ſtraits befal you. You ſee its Providence diſpenſes all, you live upon it; therefore apply your ſelves to God in the Times of need. This is evidently included in the *Promiſe*, Iſa. 41. 17. as well as expreſſed in the Command, *Phil.* 4. 6. Remember God, and he will not forget you.

6. Do not diſtract your Hearts with ſinful Cares, *Matth* 6. 25, 26. Conſider *the fowls of the Air*, (ſaith Chriſt) not the Fowls at the *Door*, that are daily fed by Hand; but thoſe of the *Air*, that know not where to have the next meal; and yet God provides for them. Remember your Relation to Chriſt, and his Engagements by Promiſe to you, and by theſe things work your Hearts to Satisfaction and Content with all the allotments of Providence.

The Eighth Performance of Providence.

VIII.

The next great Advantage and Mercy the Saints receive from the Hand of Providence, is *in their Preservation from the Snares, and Temptations of Sin, by its preventing Care over them.* That Providence wards off many a deadly stroke of Temptation, and puts by many a mortal thrust which Satan makes at our Souls, is a Truth as manifest as the Light that shineth. This is included in that Promise, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. God will *with the Temptation make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Providence gives an out-let for the Souls escape, when it is shut up into the dangerous straits of Temptation. There are two eminent Ways whereby the force and efficacy of Temptation is broken in Believers. One is by the Operation of internal Grace, *Gal.* 5. 17. *The Spirit lusteth against the Flesh*; so that ye cannot do the Things that ye would (*i. e.*) Sanctification gives Sin a miscarrying Womb after it hath conceived in the Soul. The other way, is by the external working of Providence; and of this I am here engaged to speak.

Providential Performances in our Preservation from the Power of Temptation.

The Providence of God is the great *Obex* and hinderance to a World of Sin, which else would break forth like an overflowing Flood from our corrupt Natures. It prevents abundance of Sin, which else Wicked Men would commit, *Gen.* 19. 11. The *Sodomites* were greedily pursuing their Lusts: God providentially hinders it, by smiting them blind. *Jeroboam* intends to smite the *Prophet*; Providence interpos'd, and wither'd his arm, 1 *Kings* 13. 4. Thus you see, when wicked

wicked Men have contrived, and are ready to execute their wickedneſs, Providence claps on its Manacles, *That their Hands cannot perform their enterprizes*, as it is *Job* 5. 12.

And ſo much Corruption there remains on good Men, that they would certainly plunge themſelves under much more guilt than they do, if Providence did not take greater care of them than they do of themſelves: For though they make Conſcience of keeping themſelves, and daily watch their Hearts and Ways, yet ſuch is the deceitfulneſs of ſin, that if Providence did not lay blocks in their way, it would (more frequently than it doth) entangle and defile them. And this it doth divers Ways.

(1.) Sometimes by ſtirring up others to interpoſe with ſeaſonable Counſels, which effectually diſſwade them from proſecuting an evil deſign. Thus *Abigail* meets *David* in the nick of Time, and diſſwades him from his evil Purpoſe. 1 *Sam.* 25. 34.

And I find it recorded (as on another account was noted before) of that Holy Man Mr. *Dod*, that being late at Night in his Study, he was ſtrongly moved (though at an unſeaſonable Hour) to viſit a *Gentleman* of his Acquaintance; and not knowing what might be the deſign of Providence therein, he obeyed, and went; when he came to the Houſe, after a few knocks at the Door, the *Gentleman* himſelf came to him, and askt him, whether he had any Buſineſs to him? Mr. *Dod* anſwered, no; but that he could not be quiet till he had ſeen him. O Sir, reply'd the *Gentleman*,) you are ſent of God at this Hour, for juſt now (and with that, takes the Halter out of his Pocket) I was going to deſtroy my ſelf.

And

And thus was the mischief prevented.

(2.) Sometimes by hindering the Means and Instruments, whereby the Evil it self is prevented. Thus, when good *Jehoshaphat* had joyned himself with that wicked King *Ahaziah*, to build Ships at *Ezion-Gaber* to go to *Tarshish*, God prevents the Design, by breaking the Ships with a Storm, as you read, 2 *Chron.* 20. 35, 36, 37.

We find also the Life of Mr. *Bolton*, written by Mr. *Bagshaw*, That whilst he was in *Oxford*, he had familiar acquaintance with Mr. *Anderton*, a good Scholar, but a strong *Papist*, who knowing Mr. *Bolton*'s good Parts, and perceiving that he was in some outward wants, took this advantage, and used many Arguments to perswade him to be reconciled to the Church of *Rome*, and to go over with him to the *English Seminary*, assuring him he should be furnished with all necessaries, and have gold enough. Mr. *Bolton* being at that time, poor in Mind and Purse, accepted the Motion, and a Day and Place was appointed in *Lancashire*, where they should meet and take shipping and be gone: But Mr. *Anderton* came not, and so he escaped the snare.

(3.) Sometimes by laying some strong affliction upon the Body, to prevent a worse Evil. And this is is the Meaning of *Hosea* 2. 6. *I will Hedge up her Way with Thorns.* Thus *Basil* was a long Time exercised with a violent Head-Ach, which (as he observed) was used by Providence to prevent Lust. *Paul* had a Thorn in the Flesh, a Messenger of Satan sent to Buffet him: And this Affliction, whatever it was, was ordained to prevent Pride in him, 2 *Cor.* 12. 7.

Some afflictions are τιμωρίαι, punishments, others are παιδίαι, chastisements, and these are both δοκιμασίαι, tryals of grace, and προφυλάκτικα, preservatives from Sin.

(4.) Some-

(4.) Sometimes Sin is prevented in the Saint by the better Information of their Minds at the Sacred *Oracles* of God. Thus, when ſinful Motions began to riſe in *David*'s mind, from the Proſperity of the Wicked, and his own Afflicted State, and grew to that height, that he began to think, all he had done in the way of Religion, was little better than loſt labour; he is ſet right again, and the Temptation diſſolved, by going into the *Sanctuary*, where God ſhewed him how to take new Meaſures of Perſons and Things; to judge them by their Ends and Iſſues, not their preſent appearances, *Pſalm* 73. 12, 13, 17.

(5.) And ſometimes the Providence of God prevents the Sins of his People, by removing them out of the Way of Temptations by Death. In which ſenſe we may underſtand that Text, *Iſa.* 57. 1. *The Righteous is taken away from the Evil to come*; the evil of *Sin* as well as *Sufferings*. When the Lord ſees his People low ſpirited, and not able to grapple with ſtrong Tryals and Temptations which are drawing on, it is with reſpect to them a merciful Providence, to be disbanded by Death, and ſet out of harms way.

Now conſider, and admire the Providence of God, O ye Saints, who hath had more Care of your Souls, than ever ye had of them. Had not the Providence of God thus wrought for you in a way of Prevention, it may be you had this Day been ſo many *Magor Miſſabibs*. How was the Heart of *David* melted under that preventing Providence fore-mentioned in 1 *Sam.* 25. 34. He bleſſes the Lord, the Inſtrument, and the Counſel by which his Soul was preſerved from Sin. Do but ſeriouſly bethink your ſelves of a few

few Particulars about this Case. As,

(1.) How your corrupt natures have often impetuously hurled you on towards sin, so that all the inherent grace you had, could not withstand its force, if Providence had not prevented it in some such method as you have heard, Jam. 1. 14. *Every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lusts, and enticed.* You found your selves but feathers in the wind of temptation.

(2.) How near you have been brought to the brink of sin, and yet saved by a merciful hand of Providence. May you not say whith him in Prov. 5. 14. *I was almost in the midst of all evil*: or as Psal. 73. 2. *My feet were almost gone, my steps had well nigh slidden.* O merciful Providence! that step in so opportunely to your relief.

(3.) How many have been suffered to fall by the hand of Temptations to the reproach of Religion, and wounding of their own Consciences to that degree, that they have never recovered former peace again; but lived in the world devoid of comfort to their dying day?

(4.) How woful your case had been, if the Lord had not mercifully saved you from many thousand temptations, that have assaulted you? I tell you, you cannot estimate the mercies you possess by means of such Providences. Are your names sweet, and your Consciences peaceful, two mercies as dear to you as your two eyes? Why surely, you owe them, if not wholly, yet in great measure, to the aids and assistances Providence hath given you all along the way you have passed through the dangerous tempting World to this day.

Walk therefore ſuitably to this Obligation Providence alſo: And ſee,

(1.) That you thankfully own it. Don't impute your eſcapes from Sin to accidents, or to your own Watchfulneſs or Wiſdom.

(2.) See that you tempt not Providence on the other Hand, by an irregular Relyance upon its care over you, without taking all due care of your ſelves. *Keep your ſelves in the Love of God*, Jude 21. *Keep your Hearts with all Diligence*, Prov. 4. 23. Though Providence keep you, yet it is in the Way of your Duty.

The Ninth Performance of Providence.

IX.

Providential Preventions of bodily dangers.

Thus you ſee what care Providence hath had over your Souls, *in preventing the ſpiritual dangers and miſeries that elſe would have befallen you in the way of Temptations*: In the next Place I will ſhew you, that it hath been *no leſs careful of your Bodies, and with how great tenderneſs it hath carried them in its Arms through innumerable hazards and dangers alſo.* He is called *the Keeper of Iſrael that never ſlumbereth nor ſleepeth*, Pſalm 121. 4. *The Preſerver of Men*, Job 7. 20. To diſplay the Glory of this Providence before you, let us take in Conſiderations, the perils into which the beſt of Men ſometimes fall, and the Way and Means by which Providence preſerves them in thoſe Dangers.

Pſal. 17. 8. *Thou keepeſt me as the apple of thine eye.* The Eye hath five Tunicks to guard it againſt Danger: (1.) *Aranea tunica*, like a Spiders web. (2.) *Retiformis*, like a Net. (3.) *Uvea*, like a berry. (4.) *Cornea*, like an Horn. (5.) *Adnata tunica*, the cover or lid of the Eye: Here is Guard upon Guard, reſembling the various ways Providence hath to ſecure us from Ruine.

There are manifold hazards into which we are often cast in this World. The Apostle *Paul* gives us a general account of his Dangers, in 2 *Cor.* 11. 26. And how great a wonder is it, that our Life hath not been extinguished in some of those Dangers we have been in? For,

(1.) Have not some of us fallen, and that often into very dangerous Sicknesses and Diseases, in which we have approached to the very brink of the Grave? and have or might have said with *Hezekiah*, Isa. 38. 10. *I said in the cutting off of my Days, I shall go to the Gates of the Grave: I am deprieved of the residue of my Years.* Have we not often had the Sentence of Death in our selves? And our Bodies at that Time been like a Leaky Ship in a Storm (as one aptly resembles it) that hath taken in Water on every side, till it was ready to sink? Yet hath God Preserved, Careened, and Lanched us out again as well as ever. Oh what a wonder is it, that such a crazy Body should be preserved for so many Years, and survive so many Dangers! Surely, it is not more admirable to see a *Venice-glass* pass from Hand to Hand in continual use for forty or fifty Years, and still to remain whole, notwithstanding many knocks and falls it hath had. If you enjoy health or recover out of Sicknesses, it is because *he puts none of these Diseases upon thee*, or because he is the *Lord thy Physician*, Exod. 15. 26.

See *Job* 33. 18, 19, 20, 21. & 28.

Mr. *Tho. Goodwin* in his Aggravation of Sin against mercy, *p.* 30.

The Eye is but a small Part of the Body, yet Physicians reckon no less than thirty diseases incident to it. *Nascuntur in eo leucoma, glaucoma, lippitudo, xerophthalmia, ficus, lithiasis, epiphora & trigenita id genus vitia.*

(2.) And how many deadly Dangers hath his Hand rescued some of you from, in those Years of Confusion and publick Calamity, when the

Sword was bathed in blood, and made horrid slaughter, when it may be, your lives were often given you for a prey? This *David* put a special remarque upon, Psal. 140. 7. *O God the Lord the strength of my salvation; thou hast covered my head in the day of Battle.*

Beza being in *France* in the first *Civil War*, and there tossed up and and down for two and twenty months, recorded six hundred deliverances from dangers in that space, for which he solemnly gave Gods thanks in his last Testament. If the Sword destroyed you not, it was because God did not give it a Commission so to do.

(3.) Many of you have seen wonders of salvation upon the deeps, where the hand of God hath been signally stretched forth for your rescue and deliverance. This is elegantly expressed in *Psal.* 107. 23, 24, 25, 26, 27. (which I have * elsewhere opened at large) concerning which, you may say in a *proper* sense, what the *Psalmist* doth *metaphorically*, Psal. 124. 1. & 4. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul.* To see men that have spent so many years upon the Seas, (where your lives have continually hanged in suspense before you) attain to your years when you could neither be reckon'd among the *living* nor the *dead* (as Seamen are not:) Oh what cause have you to adore your great preserver! Many thousands of your Companions are gone down, and you yet here to praise the Lord among the Living. You have bordered nearer to Eternity all your days than others, and often been in eminent perils upon the Seas, surely such, and so many Salvations call aloud upon you

* See my *Seaman's Companion*, p. 41.

you for most thankful acknowledgements.

(4.) To conclude, how innumerable hazards and accidents, (the least of which hath cut off others) hath God carried us all through! I think I may safely say, your privitive and positive mercies of this kind are more in number than the hairs of your heads. Many thousands of these dangers we never saw, nor were made particularly sensible of; but though we saw them not, our God did, and brought us out of *danger*, before he brought us into *fear*. Some have been evident to us, and those so remarkable, that we cannot think, or speak of them to this day, but our souls are freshly affected with those mercies.

It is recorded of our famous *Jewell*, that about the beginning of *Queen Mary*'s Reign, the Inquisition taking hold of him in *Oxford*, he fled to *London* by night: but providentially losing the *Road*, he escaped the *Inquisitors* who pursued him: however, he fell that night into another eminent hazard of life, for wandering up and down in the snow, he fainted, and lay starving in the way, panting and labouring for life, at which time Mr. *Latimer*'s servant found and saved him. *Clark's Lives*, p. 262.

It were easie to multiply Examples in this kind, Histories abounding with them; but I think there are few of us, but are furnisht out of our own experience abundantly; so that I shall rather chuse to press home the sense of these Providences upon you, in order to a suitable return to the God of your mercies for them, than add more Instances of this kind. To this purpose, I desire you seriously to weigh the following particulars.

(1.) Consider what you owe to Providence for your Protection, by which your Life hath been Protracted unto this Day, with the usefulness and comfort thereof. Look abroad in the World, and you may daily see some in every place, who are Objects of Pity, bereaved by sad accidents of all the Comforts of Life, whilst in the mean time Providence hath tenderly preserved you, *keeping all your Bones, so that not one of them is broken*, *Psalm* 34. 20. Is not the Elegant and Comely Structure of thy Body spoiled, thy members distorted, or made so many Seats of Torment, the usefulness of any part deprived? why, this is because Providence never quitted its hand of thee since thou camest out of the Womb, but with a watchful Eye and tender Hand hath guarded thee in every Place, and kept thee as its charge.

The learned *Alsted* sets himself to enumerate the manifold hazards through which the life of man is carried in the hand of Providence, in *Theol. Catechet.* p. 191, 192, &c. and piously concludes these Words, *Denique, quod ab innumeris malis, quæ ab omnibus creaturis omni tempore tibi impendent, mirabiliter liberaris; in his omnibus inquam quo scimus crebro evenire solita, ac proinde ita se habent, ut nobis quoque possint evenire, solam Dei providentiam debes suspicere & prædicare.*

(2.) Consider, how every Member which hath been so tenderly kept, hath nevertheless been an Instrument of Sin against the Lord; and that not only in the Days of your unregeneracy, when *ye yielded your Members as Instruments of unrighteousness unto Sin*, (as the *Apostle* speaks in *Rom.* 6. 13.) but even since you gave them up in Covenant unto the Lord, as dedicated Instruments to his Service: And yet how tender hath Providence been over them! You have often provoked him to afflict you in every Part, and lay *Penal* Evil upon every Member that hath been instrumental in *moral* Evil; but O how great have

hit

his compassions been towards you, and his patience admirable!

(3.) Consider, what is the aim of Providence in all the tender care it hath manifested for you? why doth it protect you so assiduously, and suffer no evil to befal you? Is it not that you should imploy your bodies for God, and cheerfully apply your selves to that service he hath called you to? Doubtless, this is the end and level of these mercies; for else to what purpose are they afforded you? Your bodies are a part of Christs purchase, as well as your souls, 1 *Cor.* 6. 19. They are committed to the charge and Tutelage of Angels, *Heb.* 1. 14. who have performed many services for them. They are dedicated by your selves to the Lord, and that upon the highest account, *Rom.* 12. 1. They have already been the subjects of manifold mercies in this world, *Psal.* 35. 10. and shall partake of singular glory and happiness in the world to come, *Phil.* 3. 21. And shall they not then be employed, yea, cheerfully worn out in his service? How reasonable is it they should be so? Why are they so tenderly preserved by God, if they must not be used for God?

The Tenth Performance of Providence.

X.

You have heard many and great things performed for you by Divine Providence, in the former particulars; but there is an eminent favour it bestows on the Saints, which hath not yet been considered, and indeed is too little minded by us, and that is, *The Aid and assistance* Providential Assistances in the Work of Mortification.

it gives the people of God in the great work of Mortification.

Mortification of our ſinful affections and paſſions, is the one half of our Sanctification, Rom. 6. 11. *dead indeed unto ſin, but alive unto God.*

It's the great Evidence of our Intereſt in Chriſt. See *Gal.* 5. 24. *Rom.* 6. 5, 6, 7, 8, 9.

It's our ſafety in the hour of Temptation. The corruptions in the world are through luſt. 2 *Pet.* 1. 4.

Our Inſtrumental fitneſs for ſervice, depends much upon it, 2 *Tim.* 2. 21. *John* 15. 2. How great a ſervice to our ſouls therefore muſt that be, by which this bleſſed work is carried on upon them?

Now there are two Means or Inſtruments imployed in this work. The *Spirit*, who effects it *internally*, *Rom.* 8. 13. And *Providence*, which aſſiſts it *externally*. The *Spirit* indeed is the principal Agent, upon whoſe operation, the ſucceſs of this work depends; and all the Providences in the World can never effect it without him. But theſe are ſecondary and ſubordinate means, which by the bleſſing of the Spirit upon them, have a great ſtroke in the work. How they are ſo ſerviceable to this end and purpoſe, I ſhall open in the following account.

(1.) More generally. The moſt wiſe God orders the diſpenſations of Providence in a bleſſed ſubordination to the work of his Spirit. There is a ſweet harmony betwixt them in their diſtinct workings. They all meet in that one bleſſed iſſue which God hath by the councel of his Will directed them to, *Eph.* 1. 11. *Rom.* 8. 28. Hence it is, that the Spirit is ſaid to be in, and order

rder the motions of the wheels of Providence, *Ezek.* 1. 20. and so they move together by consent. Now, one great part of the Spirit's internal work, being to destroy sin in the People of God; see how comformable to his design, external Providences are steer'd and order'd in the following particulars.

(1.) There is in all the regenerate a strong propension and inclination to sin, and in that lyes a principal part of the power of sin. Of this *Paul* sadly complains, Rom. 7. 23. *But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin, which is in my members*: and every believer daily finds it to his grief. O it's hard, it's hard to forbear those things that grieve God. God hath made an hedge about us, and fenced us against sin by his Laws; but there is a proneness in nature to break over the hedge, and that against the very reluctations of the Spirit of God in us. Now, see in this case, the concurrence and assistance of Providence for the prevention of sin; look, as the Spirit internally resists those sinful inclinations, so Providence externally lays barrs and blocks in our way to hinder and prevent sin: and this is the meaning of those places lately cited, *Hosea* 2. 6. & 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. So *Job* 33. 17. 18. 19. There is many a bodily distemper inflicted on this very score, to be a clog to prevent sin: Oh bear them patiently upon this consideration. *Basil* was sorely grieved with an inveterate head-ach, he earnestly prays, it might be removed; God removed it: but no sooner was he freed of this clog, but he felt the inordinate motions of lust; which made him pray for his

his head-ach again. So it might be with many of us, if our clogs were off.

Queſt. A Queſtion may be moved here, *Whether it be the genius and property of a gracious ſpirit, to forbear ſin, becauſe of the rod of affliction?* They have ſurely higher motives and nobler principles than theſe. This is the temper of a carnal and ſlavish ſpirit.

Sol. Indeed it is ſo, when this is the ſole or principal reſtraint from ſin: when a man abhors not ſin, becauſe of the intrinſick *filth*, but only because of the troubleſome *conſequents* and *effects*. But this is vaſtly different from the caſe of the Saints under ſanctified afflictions; for as they have *higher* motives and *nobler* principles, ſo they have *lower* and more *ſenſible* ones too; and theſe are, in their kind and place, very uſeful to them. (2.) Beſides, you muſt know, that afflictions work in another way upon gracious hearts to reſtrain them from ſin, or warn them againſt ſin, than they do upon others. It is not ſo much the ſmart of the rod which they feel, as the tokens of Gods diſpleaſure, which affright and ſcare them, Job 10. 17. *Thou reneweſt thy witneſſes againſt me*, &c. and this is that which principally affects them. See Pſal. 6. 1. *O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure:* and Jer. 10. 24. *O Lord, correct me, but with Judgment, not in thy anger, leſt thou bring me to nothing:* and ſurely this is no low and common argument.

(2.) Notwithſtanding this double fence of Gods command, and preventive afflictions, yet ſin is too hard for the beſt of men: their corruptions carry them through all to ſin. And when

is ſo, not only doth the *Spirit* work internally, but *Providence* alſo works externally in order to their *reduction*. The ways of ſin are not only made bitter unto them, by the remorſe of Conſcience, but by thoſe afflictive rods upon the outward man, with which God alſo follows it; and in both theſe reſpects, I find that place expounded, Eccleſ. 10. 8. *Whoſo breaketh an hedge, a Serpent ſhall bite him.* If, as ſome expound it, the *hedge* be the *Law* of God, then the *Serpent* is the *remorſe* of Conſcience, and the ſharp teeth of *affliction*, which he ſhall quickly feel, if he be one that belongs to God.

The deſign and aim of theſe afflictive Providences, is to purge and cleanſe them from that pollution into which temptations have plunged them, Iſa. 27. 9, *By this ſhall the iniquity of Jacob be purged, and this is all the fruit, to take away his ſin.* To the ſame purpoſe is that place, Pſal. 119. 67. *Before I was afflicted I went aſtray, but now have I kept thy word.* Theſe afflictions have the ſame uſe and end to our ſouls, that froſty weather hath upon thoſe clothes that are laid a bleaching; they alter the hue, and make it whither, Dan. 11. 35. *And ſome of them of underſtanding ſhall fall to try them, and to purge, and to make them white.*

And here it may be queried, *Upon what account afflictions are ſaid to purge away the iniquities of the Saints. Is it not unwarrantable, and very diſhonourable to Chriſt, to attribute that to affliction, which is the peculiar honour of his blood?*

It is confeſſed, that the blood of Chriſt is the only *Lavatory*, or Fountain opened for ſin, and that no afflictions how many, or ſtrong, or continual

tinual ſoever they be, can in themſelves purg away the pollution of ſin, as we ſee in wicke men, who are afflicted and afflicted, and agai afflicted; and yet, nevertheleſs ſinful: and th Torments of Hell, how extream, univerſal an continual ſoever they are, yet ſhall never fetch out the ſtain of one ſin.

But yet, this hinders not, but that a ſanctifie affliction, may in the efficacy and vertue of *Chriſt* blood, produce ſuch bleſſed effects upon th ſoul. Though a *Croſs* without a *Chriſt*, never di any man good, yet thouſands have been beholde to the *Croſs*, as it hath wrought in the vertue o his death for their good. And this is the cas of thoſe ſouls that this diſcourſe is concerne about.

(3.) We find the beſt hearts, if God beſtow any comfortable enjoyment upon them, too apt to be over-heated in their affections towards it, and to be too much taken up with theſe outward comforts. This alſo ſheweth the great power and ſtrength of corruption in the people of God, and muſt by ſome means or other be mortified in them.

This was the caſe of *Hezekiah*, his heart was too much affected with his treaſures; ſo that he could not hide a vain-glorious temper, as you find *Iſa.* 39. 2. and ſo good *David*, *Pſal.* 30. 7. he thought his Mountain, (*i. e.* his Kingdom, and the ſplendor and glory of his preſent ſtate) had ſtood ſo faſt, that it ſhould never be moved.

The ſame good man, how did he let out his heart and affections upon his beautiful Son *Abſalon*? as appears by the doleful lamentation he made

made at his death, prizing him above his own life, which was a thousand times more worth than he.

So *Jonah*, when God raised up a *Gourd* for him to shelter him from the Sun, how excessively was he taken with it, and was exceedingly glad of it?

But will God suffer things to lye thus? Shall the Creature purloin, and draw away our affections from him? No, this is our corruption, and God will purge it. And to this end he sends forth Providence to smite those Creatures, on which our affections are either inordinately or excessively let out, or else to turn them into rods, and smite us by them.

Is *Hezekiah* too much puffed up with his full Exchequer? Why, those very *Babylonians* to whom he boasted of it, shall empty it, and make a prey of it, *Isa.* 39.6.

Is *David* hugging himself in a fond conceit of the stability of his Earthly Splendor? Lo, how soon Gods beclouds all, *Psal.* 30. 7. Is *Absalom* doted on, and crept too far into his good Fathers heart? this shall be the Son of his sorrow, that will seek after his Fathers life.

Is *Jonah* so transported with his Gourd? God will prepare a Worm to smite it, *Jonah* 4. 6, 7.

How many Husbands, Wives and Children hath Providence smitten upon this very account? It might have spared them longer, if they had been loved more regularly, and moderately. This hath blasted many an Estate, and hopeful project; and it is a merciful dispensation for our good.

(4.) The strength of our unmortified Corruption

ruption ſhews it ſelf in our pride, and the ſwe
ling vanity of our hearts when we have a nam
and eſteem among men; when we are applaud
and honoured, when we are admired for any g
or excellency that is in us, this draws forth t
pride of the heart, and ſhews the vanity that is
it. So you read, Prov. 27. 21. *As the fining p
for ſilver, and the furnace for gold, ſo is a man
his praiſe:* (*i. e.*) as the furnace will diſcov
what droſs is in the metal when it is melted,
will praiſe and commendations diſcover wh
pride is in the heart of him that receives the
This made a good man ſay, *He that praiſes m
wounds me.* And which is more ſtrange, this c
ruption may be felt in the heart, even when t
laſt breath is ready to expire. It was the ſayi
of one of the *German Divines*, when thoſe abo
him recounted for his encouragement the ma
ſervices he had done for God, *auferte ignem* (ſa
he) *adhuc enim paleas habeo. Take away the fi
for there is ſtill the chaff of pride in me.* T
crucifie this corruption Providence takes
the bridle of reſtraint from ungodly men, a
ſometimes permits them to traduce the nam
of Gods ſervants, as *Shimei* did *David's*. Ye
they ſhall fall into diſeſteem among their friend
as *Paul* did among the *Corinthians*; and all this
keep down the ſwelling of their ſpirits at th
ſenſe of thoſe excellencies that are in them: Th
deſign of theſe Providences being nothing elſe
but to *hide pride from man.* Yea, it deſerves a ſp
cial remarque, that when ſome good men ha
been engaged in a publick and eminent wor
and have therein, it may be, too much ſough
their own applauſe, God hath withheld uſual a
ſiſtanc

ſtance at ſuch times from them, and cauſed them falter ſo in their work, that they have come off with ſhame and pity at ſuch times, how ready and preſential ſoever they have been at other times. It were eaſie to give divers remarkable examples to confirm this Obſervation. But I ſs on.

(5.) The corruption of the heart ſhews it ſelf, in raiſing up great expectations to our ſelves m the Creature, and projecting abundance of licity and contentment from ſome promiſing and hopeful enjoyments we have in the world. his we find to have been the caſe of holy *Job* in e days of his proſperity, Job 28. 19. *Then I ſaid, I ſhall dye in my neſt, I ſhall multiply my days e the ſand.* But how ſoon were all theſe expe-tions daſht by a gloomy Providence, that be-hted him in the Noon-tide of his proſperity: l all this for his good, to take off his heart re fully from creature expectations. We en find, the beſt men to over-reckon themſelves worldly things, and over-act their confidences ut them. They that have great and well-unded expectations from *Heaven*, may have great and ungrounded expectations from the *rth*. But when it is ſo, it's very uſual for ovidence to undermine their Earthly hopes, convince them by experience how vain they are. Thus *Haggai* 2. 9. the peoples hearts were ently ſet upon proſperous Providences, full rveſts, and great Increaſe; whilſt in the mean ile no regard was had to the Worſhip of od, and the things of his Houſe; therefore rovidence blaſts their hopes, and brings them little.

(6.) Cor-

(6.) Corruption discovers it self in depe dance upon Creature comforts, and sensible pro Oh how apt are the best men, to lean upon tho things, and stay themselves upon them! Th did *Israel* stay themselves upon *Egypt*, as a feeb man would lean upon his staff; but God suffe it both to fail them, and wound them, *Ezek.* 2 6, 7. 8. So for single persons, how apt are th to depend upon their sensible supports? Th we lean on our Relations, and the inwa thoughts of our hearts are, that they shall be t us so many springs of comfort to refresh u thoughout our lives; but God will shew us b his Providence our mistake and error in the things. Thus an Husband is smitten, to dra the soul of a Wife nearer to God in dependen upon him, 1 *Tim.* 5. 5. So for Children, we a apt to say of this or that *Child*, as *Lamech Noah*, Gen. 5. 29. *This same shall comfort us*; b the wind passes over these flowers and they a withered, to teach us, that our happiness is no bound up in these enjoyments. So for ou *Estates*, when the world smiles upon us, and w have got a warm nest, how do we propheſie rest and peace in those acquisitions, mindi with good *Baruch*, great things for our selve but Providence by a particular or general calam ty over-turns our projects, as *Jer.* 45. 4. 5. and all this to reduce our hearts from the Creature, to God, our only rest.

(7.) Corruption discovers its strength in good men, by their *adherence* to things below, and lothness to go hence. This often proceeds from the engaging enjoyments, and pleasant fru itions we have here below. Providence mortifies this

this inclination in the Saints, (1.) By killing those ensnaring comforts before-hand, making all or most of our pleasant things to dye before us. (2.) By imbittering this world to us, by the troubles of it. (3.) By making life undesirable, through the pains and infirmities we feel in the body and so loosing our root, in order to our more easie fall by the fatal stroke.

And thus I have finished the Second General Head; but before I pass from this, I cannot but make a pause, and desire you with me, to stand in an holy amazement, and wonder at the dealings of God with such poor worms as we are! Surely God deals familiarly with men! his condescensions to his own clay are astonishing! All that I shall note at present about it, shall be under these three heads, wherein I find the matter of my present meditations summed up by the *Psalmist*, Psal. 144. 3. *Lord what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him? or the son of man, that thou makest account of him?* And in this Scripture you have represented,

1. The immense and transcendent greatness of God, who is infinitely above us and all our thoughts, Job 11. 7, 8, 9. *Canst thou by searching, find out God? canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven; what canst thou do? deeper than Hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* 2 Chron. 2. 6. *The Heaven and Heaven of Heavens cannot contain him.* Exod. 15. 11. *He is glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.* When the Scripture speaks of him comparatively, see how it expresses his greatness, Isa. 40, 15. 19, 17. *Behold the Nations are as the drop*

of a bucket, and are counted as the ſmall duſt of the balance: behold he taketh up the Iſles as a very little thing. And Lebanon is not ſufficient to burn, nor the Beaſts thereof ſufficient for a burnt-offering. All Nations before him are as nothing, and they are accounted to him leſs than nothing and vanity. When the holieſt men have addreſt themſelves to him, ſee with what humility and deep adoration they have ſpoken of him and to him! Iſa. 6. 5. *Woe is me for I am undone, becauſe I am a man of unclean lips, and I will dwell in the midſt of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have ſeen the King the Lord of Hoſts.* Nay, what reſpects the very Angels of Heaven have of that glorious Majeſty, you may ſee, Ver. 2, 3. *Each one had ſix wings, with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cryed unto another, and ſaid, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hoſts; the whole Earth is full of his glory.*

The baſeneſs, vileneſs and utter unworthineſs of Man, yea, the holieſt and beſt of men before God, Pſal. 39. 5. *Verily every man, at his beſt eſtate, is altogether vanity. Every man*, take where you will: and every man *in his beſt eſtate*, or ſtanding in his freſheſt glory, is, not only *vanity*, but *altogether* vanity. *Col Adam col Hebel*, every man is every vanity. For do but conſider the beſt of men in their *Extraction*, in their *Conſtitution*, and in thir outward *Condition*.

(1.) In their *Extraction*, Eph. 2. 3. *By nature Children of wrath even as others.* The blood that runs in our veins, is as much tainted as theirs in Hell.

(3.) Conſider them in their *Conſtitution* and natural temper, and it is no better, yea, in many worſe

worse temper than in Reprobates: and though grace depose sin in them from the Throne; yet Oh what offensive and God provoking corruptions daily break out of the best hearts;

(3.) Consider them in their *outward Condition*, and they are inferiour (for the most part) to others, 1 *Cor.* 1. 26, 27, 28, *&c.* and *Matth.* 11. 25. *I thank thee O Father* (saith Christ) *that thou hast hid these things from the Wise and Prudent, and hast revealed them unto Babes.*

And now let us consider and admire, that ever this great and blessed God should be so much concerned as you have heard he is in all his Providences about such vile despicable Worms as we are! He needs us not, but is perfectly blessed and happy in himself without us. We can add nothing to him, Job. 22. 2. *Can a man be profitable to God?* No, the holiest of men add nothing to him; yet, see how great account he makes of us. For,

1. Doth not his eternal electing love bespeak the dear account he made of us, *Eph.* 1. 4, 5. How ancient, how free, and how astonishing is this act of grace! This is that design which all Providences are in pursuit of, and will not rest till they have executed.

2. Doth not the gift of his *only Son* out of his bosom speak this truth, That God makes great account of this vile thing Man? Never was man so magnified before. If *David* could say, Psal. 8. 3. *When I consider the Heavens the work of thy hands, the Moon and Stars which thou hast ordained, Lord, what is man?* How much more may we say? when we consider thy *Son*, that lay in thy bosom, his infinite excellency, and unspeakable

dearneſs to thee; Lord, what is man, that ſuch a *Chriſt* ſhould be delivered to death for him! for *him*, and not for fallen *Angels!* Heb. 2. 19. for *him* when in a ſtate of enmity with God! *Rom.* 5 8.

3. Doth not the aſſiduity of his Providential care for us, ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. 27. 3. *Left any hurt it, I will keep it night and day. He withdraweth not his eye from the righteous,* Job 36. 7. no, not a moment all their days; for did he ſo, a thouſand miſchiefs in that moment would ruſh in upon him, and ruine him.

4. Doth not the tenderneſs of his Providence ſpeak his eſteem of us? Iſa. 66. 13. *as one whom his Mother comforteth, ſo will I comfort you.* He comforts his (*viz.* by refreſhing Providences) as an indulgent Mother her tender Child. So Iſa. 31. 5. *As birds flying, viz.* to their neſts, when their young are in danger, *ſo he defends his.* No σοφγη tenderneſs in the Creature can ſhadow forth the tender bowels of the Creator.

5 Doth not the variety of the fruits of his Providence ſpeak it? Lam. 3. 23. *Our mercies are new every morning.* See *Pſal.* 40. 5. It is a fountain from which do ſtream forth ſpiritual and temporal, ordinary and extraordinary, publick and perſonal mercies, mercies without number.

6. Doth not the miniſtration of *Angels* in the Providential Kingdom ſpeak it? Heb. 1. ult. *Are they not all miniſtring ſpirits ſent forth,* &c.

Preached *Novemb.* v. 7. Doth not the Providence, which this day calls us to celebrate the memory of, beſpeak the great account God hath for his people? O if not ſo, why had we not been given up as a prey to their teeth? See *Pſal.* 124. If the Lord had not been

on our side then wicked men, there compar'd to fire, water, wild beasts, had devoured us. O blessed be God for that teeming Providence that hath already brought forth more than seventy years liberty and peace to the Church of God. I shall move in behalf of this Providence, that you would do by it, as the Jews by their *Purim*, *Esth.* 9. 27, 28. and the rather, because we seem now to be as near danger by the same Enemy as ever since that time: and if such a mercy as this be forgotten, God may say as Judges 10. 13. *I will deliver you no more.*

The Third General Head.

Having proved the Concernments of the people of God to be conducted by the care of special Providence, and given Instances in the ten last named Heads, what influence Providence hath upon those Interests and concerns of theirs among the rest; we come in the next place, to prove it to be the duty of the people of God, to reflect upon these performances of Providence for them, at all times; but especially in times of straits and troubles.

This I will evidence to be your unquestionable duty, by the following particulars.

1. This is our duty, because God hath expressly commanded it, and called his people to make the most serious reflections, and animadversions upon his works, whether of mercy or Judgement. So when that dreadfullest of all Judgements was executed upon his professing people for their Apostasie from God, and God had removed the Symbols of his presence from among them, the rest are bid to go, (*i. e.*) by their

meditations, (to ſend at leaſt their thoughts) to *Shiloh*, and *ſee what God did to it*, Jer. 7. 12. So for mercies, God calls us us to conſider and review them, Micah 6. 5. *Remember O my people from Shittim unto Gilgal, that ye may know the faithfulneſs of the Lord*: *q.d.* if you reflect not upon that ſignal Providence, my faithfulneſs will be covered, and your unfaithfulneſs diſcovered. So for Gods works of Providence about the Creatures, we are called to conſider them, that we may prop up our faith by thoſe conſiderations for our own ſupplies, *Matth.* 6. 28. conſider the Fowls and Lillies.

2. It's plain, that this is our duty, becauſe the neglect of it is every where in Scripture condemned as a ſin. To be of an heedleſs inobſervant temper is very diſpleaſing to God; and ſo much appears by that Scripture, Iſa. 26. 11. *Lord when thy hand is lifted up they will not ſee.* Nay, it is a ſin, which God threatens and denounces woe againſt in his Word, *Pſal.* 28. 4, 5. and *Iſa.* 5. 12, 13. Yea, God not only threatens, but ſmites men with viſible Judgements for this ſin, *Job* 34. 26, 27.

And for this end and purpoſe it is, that the Holy Ghoſt hath affixed thoſe notes of attention to the narratives of the works of Providence in *Scripture*, all which do invite and call men to a due and dear obſervation of them. So in that great and celebrated work of Providence, in delivering *Iſrael* out of *Egyptian* bondage, you find a note of *attention* twice affixed to it, *Exod.* 3. 2, 9. So when that daring Enemy *Rabſheka* (that put *Hezekiah* and all the people into ſuch a conſternation) was defeated by Providence, there

is

is a note of *attention* prefixt to that Providence, 2 Kings 19. 7. *Behold, I will send a blast upon him*, &c. So when God glorifies his wisdom and power, in delivering his people from their Enemies, and ensnaring them in the works of their own hands, a double note of *attention* is affixed to that double work of Providence, *Psal.* 9. 16. *Higgaion Selah.* So at the opening of every seal which contains a remarkable series or branch of Providence, how particularly is attention commanded to every one of them, Rev. 6. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. *Come and see, come and see* All these are very useless and superfluous additions in Scripture, if no such duty lyes upon us. See *Psal.* 66. 5.

4. Without due observation of the work of Providence, no praise can be rendered to God for any of them. Praise and thanksgiving for mercies depend upon this act of observation of them, and cannot be performed without it. *Psalm* 107. is spent in narratives of Gods Providential care of men. To his people in straits, *Ver.* 4, 5, 6. To prisoners in their bonds, *Ver.* 10, 11, 12. To men that lye languishing upon beds of sickness, *Ver.* 17, 18, 19. To Seamen upon the stormy Ocean, *Ver.* 23, *&c.* To men in times of famine, *Ver.* 33. to *Ver.* 40. Yea, his Providence is displayed in all those changes that fall out in the world, debasing the high, and exalting the low, *Ver.* 40, 41. and at every paragraph men are still called upon to praise God for each of these Providences: but *Ver. ult.* shews you what a necessary ingredient to that duty, observation is, *Whoso is wise, and will observe these things; even they shall understand the loving kindness of the Lord.*

So that of neceſſity, God muſt be defrauded of his praiſe, if this duty be neglected.

5. Without this, we loſe the uſefulneſs and benefit of all the works of God for us or others, which would be an unſpeakable loſs indeed to us. This is the food our faith lives upon in days of diſtreſs, Pſal. 74. 14. *Thou brakeſt the heads of Leviathan in pieces, and gaveſt him to be meat to the people inhabiting the Wilderneſs*; (*i. e.*) food to their faith. From Providences paſt, Saints uſe to argue to freſh and new ones to come. So *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 37. *The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the Lyon, and out of the paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philiſtin.* So *Paul*, 2 Cor. 1. 10. *Who hath delivered, and in whom alſo we truſt, that he will yet deliver.* If theſe be forgotten or not conſidered the hands of faith hang down. See Matth. 16. 9. *How is it that ye do not remember, neither conſider?* This is a *Topick* from which the Saints had uſed to draw their Arguments in prayer for new mercies. As *Moſes*, Numb. 14. 19. when he prays for continued or new pardons for the people, he argues from what was paſt, *As thou haſt forgiven them from Egypt until now.* So the Church, *Iſa.* 51. 9, 10. argues for new Providences; upon the ſame ground *Moſes* pleaded for new pardons.

It is a vile ſlighting of God, not to obſerve what of himſelf he manifeſts in his Providences. For in all Providences, eſpecially in ſome, he comes nigh to us. He doth ſo in his Judgements, Mal. 3. 5. *I will come nigh to you in judgement.* He comes nigh in mercies alſo, Pſal. 145. 18. *The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him*

him, &c. Yea, he is said to visit us by his Providence when he corrects, *Hosea* 9. 7. and when he saves and delivers, *Psal.* 106. 4. These visitations of God preserve our spirits, *Job.* 10. 12. And it is a wonderful condescension in the great God to visit us so often, Job 7. 18. *every morning and every moment.* But not to take notice of it, is a vile and bruitish contempt of God, *Isa.* 1. 3. *Zeph.* 3. 2. You would not do so by a man for whom you have any respect. It's the Character of the wicked, not to regard Gods favours, *Isa.* 26. 10. or frowns, *Jer.* 5. 3.

7. In a word, men can never order their addresses to God in prayer, suitable to their conditions, without due *observation* of his Providences. Your prayers are to be suitable to your conditions: sometimes we are called to praise, sometimes to humiliation. In the way of his Judgements you are to wait for him, *Isa.* 26. 8. to prepare to meet him, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. *Amos* 4. 12. Now your business is, to turn away his anger which you see approaching. And sometimes you are called to praise him for mercies received, *Isa.* 12. 1, 2. but then you must first observe them.

Thus you find the matter of *David*'s Psalms still varied, according to the Providences that befell him: but an inobservant heedless spirit can never do it. And thus you have the grounds of the Duty briefly represented; we pass on to.

The Fourth General Head.

Let us next (according to our method proposed) proceed to shew, in what manner we are to reflect upon the *performances of Providence* for us. And certainly, it is not every slight

ſlight and tranſient glance, nor every cold, hiſtorical, unaffecting rehearſal, or recognition of his Providences towards you, that will paſs with God, for a diſcharge of this great duty. No, no, it is another manner of buſineſs than the moſt of men underſtand it to be. O that we were but acquainted with this heavenly ſpiritual exerciſe! how ſweet would it make our lives! how light would it make our burdens! Ah Sirs! you live eſtranged from the pleaſure of the Chriſtian life, while you live in the ignorance or neglect of this duty. Now to lead you up to this heavenly, ſweet and profitable exerciſe, I will beg your attention to the following Directions.

The Firſt Direction.

Labour to get as full and through recognitions of the Providences of God about you from firſt to laſt, as you are able. O fill your hearts with the thoughts of him and his ways. If a ſingle act of Providence be ſo raviſhing and tranſporting, what would many ſuch be, if they were preſented together to the view of the ſoul? If one *Star* be ſo beautiful to behold, what is a *Conſtellation*! Let your reflection therefore upon the acts and workings of Providence for you, be full *extenſively* and *intenſively*.

(1.) Let them be as *extenſively* full as may be. Search backward into all the performances of Providence throughout your lives. So did *Aſaph* in Pſal. 77. 11, 12. *I will remember the works of the Lord: ſurely I will remember thy wonders of old: I will meditate of all thy works, and talk of thy doings.* He laboured to recover and retrieve the ancient providences of Gods mercies many years paſt,

past, and suck a fresh sweetness out of them by new reviews of them. Ah Sirs, let me tell you, there is not such a pleasant *History* for you to read in all the world, as the *History* of your own lives, if you would but sit down, and record to your selves from the beginning hitherto, what God hath been to you, and done for you; what signal manifestations, and out-breakings of his mercy, faithfulness and love, there have been in all the conditions you have past through: if your hearts do not melt before you have gone half through that History, they are hard hearts indeed. *My father, the guide of my youth.*

(2.) Let them be as *intensively* full as may be. Let not your thoughts swim like *feathers* upon the surface of the waters, but sink like *lead* to the bottom. *The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein*, Psal. 111. 2. Not that I think it feasible to sound the depth of Providence by our short line, Psal. 77. 19. *Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, and thy footsteps are not known*; but it's our duty to dive as far as we can; and to admire the depth, when we cannot touch, the bottom. It is in our viewing Providences, as it was with *Elijah's* servant, when he looked out for rain, 1 *Kings* 18. 44. he went out once and viewed the Heavens, and saw nothing; but the *Prophet* bids him go again and again, and look upon the face of Heaven seven times; and when he had done so, what now, saith the *Prophet*? O now, saith he, *I see a cloud rising like a mans hand*; and then, keeping his eye upon it intent, he sees the whole face of Heaven covered with clouds. So you may look upon some Providences once and again,

again, and see little or nothing in them; but look *seven times*, (i. e.) *mediate often* upon it, and you shall see its increasing glory, like that increasing cloud.

There are divers things to be distinctly pondered, and valued in one single Providence, before you can judge the amount and worth of it: as (1.) The *seasonableness* of mercy may give it a very great value. When it shall be timed so opportunely, and fall out in such a nick, as may make it a thousand fold more considerable to you than the same mercy would have been at another time. Thus when our wants are suffered to grow to an extremity, and all visible hopes fail, then to have relief given in, wonderfully enhances the price of such a mercy, *Isa.* 41. 17, 18.

(2.) The *peculiar care* and kindness of Providence to us, is a consideration which exceedingly heightens the mercy in it self, and endears it to us. So, when in general calamities upon the world, we are exempted by the favour of Providence, covered under its wings; when God shall call to us in evil days, *Come my people, enter thou into thy Chambers*, as it is in *Isa.* 26. 20, 19. When such *Promises* shall be fulfilled to us in times of want and famine, as *Psal.* 33. 18, 19. When others are abandoned and exposed to misery, who have every way as much, it may be much more visible security against it; and yet they delivered up, and we saved: Oh, how endearing are such Providences! *Psal.* 91. 7, 8.

(3.) The *Introductiveness* of a Providence, is of special regard and consideration, and by no means to be neglected by us. There are leading providences, which how slight and trivial so-

ever

ever they may seem in themselves, yet in this respect justly challenge the first rank among Providential favours to us; because they usher in a multitude of other mercies, and draw a blessed train of happy consequences after them. Such a Providence was that of *Jesse's* sending *David* with provisions to his Brethren that lay encamped in the Army, 1 *Sam.* 17. 17. And thus every Christian may furnish himself out of his own stock of Experience, if he will but reflect, and consider, the Place where he is, the Relations that he hath, and the Way by which he was led into them.

(4.) The *Instruments* imployed by Providence for you, are of special consideration. And the finger of God is clearly seen by us when we pursue that meditation. For,

Sometimes great mercies shall be conveyed to us by very improbable means, and more probable ones laid aside. A *stranger* shall be stirred up to do that for you, which your near relations in nature had no power or will to do for you. *Jonathan*, a meer stranger to *David*, clave closer to him, and was more friendly and useful to him, than his own Brethren, who despised and slighted him. Ministers have found more kindness and respect from strangers, than their own people that are more obliged to them, Mark 6. 4. *A Prophet* (saith Christ) *is not without Honour, save in his own Countrey, and among his own Kin and in his own House.*

Sometimes by the hands of *Enemies*, as well as Strangers, Rev. 12. 16. *The Earth helped the Woman.* God hath bowed the hearts of many wicked men, to shew great kindness to his people, *Acts* 28. 2.

Some-

Sometimes God makes use of Instruments for good to his people, who designed nothing but evil and mischief to them. Thus *Joseph's* Brethren were instrumental to his advancement in *that very thing*, wherein they designed his *ruine*, *Gen.* 50. 20.

(5.) The *design* and *scope* of Providence must not escape our through consideration, what the aim and level of Providence is. And truly this of all others, is the most warming and melting consideration. You have the general account of the aim of all Providences, in Rom. 8. 28. *And we know that all things work together for good, to them that love God.* A thousand friendly hands are at work for them, to promote and bring about their happiness. O, this is enough to sweeten the bitterness Providence to us, that we know it shall turn to our salvation, *Phil.* 1. 19.

(9.) The *respect* and *relation* Providence bears to our *prayers*, is of singular consideration, and a most taking and sweet meditation. *Prayer* honours Providence, and Providence honours Prayer. Great notice is taken of this in Scripture, *Gen.* 24. 45. *Dan.* 9. 20. *Acts* 12. 12. You have had the *very Petitions* you *asked* of him. Providences have born the very signatures of your Prayers upon them. O how affectingly sweet are such mercies?

The Second Direction.

In all your Observation of Providence, have special respect to that Word of God, which is fulfilled and made good to you thereby.

This is a clear truth, that all Providences have relation to the written Word. Thus *Solomon* in his

his prayer, acknowledges, that the Promises and Providences of God went along step by step with his Father *David* all his days; and that his hand (put there for his Providence) had fulfilled whatever his mouth had spoken, 1 *Kings* 8. 24. So *Joshuah* in like manner acknowledges, that *not one good thing had failed of all the good things which the Lord had spoken*, Jos. 23. 14. He had carefully observed what relation the *Works* of God had to his *Word*. He compared them together, and found an exact harmony. And so may you too, if you will compare them as he did.

This I shall the more insist upon, because it is by some *Interpreters* supposed to be the very scope of the Text. For (as was noted in the Explication) they supply and fill the sense with *quæ promisit*, the things which he hath promised; and so read the Text thus, *I will cry unto God most high, to God who performeth* the things he hath promised, *for me*.

Now though I see no reason to limit the sense so narrowly, yet it cannot be denyed, but this is an especial part of its intendment. Let us therefore in all our reviews of Providence, consider, what word of God, whether it be of threatning, caution, counsel, or promise is at any time made good to us by his Providences. And hereby a twofold excellent advantage will result to us.

(1.) This will greatly confirm to us the truth of the Scripture, when we shall see its truth so manifest in the events. Certainly had *Scripure* no other seal or attestaton, this alone would be an unanswerable Argument of its diviniry. When men shall find in all ages the works of God wrought so exactly accordingly to this Model,

that

that we may ſee, As we have read or heard, ſo have we ſeen. O how great a confirmation is here before our eyes!

(2.) This will abundantly direct and inſtruct us in our preſent duties under all Providences. We ſhall know hereby what we have to do, and how to carry our ſelves under all changes of conditions. You can learn the voice and errand of the *rod* only from the Word, *Pſal.* 94. 12. The Word interprets the works of God. Providences in themſelves, are not a perfect guide. They often puzzle and entangle our thoughts; but bring them to the word, and your duty will be quickly manifeſted, as *Pſal.* 73. 16, 17. *Until I went into the Sanctuary, then I underſtood their end*: and, not only their *end*: but his own *duty*, to be quiet in an afflicted condition, and not envy their proſperity.

Well then, bring thoſe Providences you have paſt through, or are now under, to the Word; and you will find your ſelves ſurrounded with a marvellous light; and ſee the verification of the Scriptures in them. I ſhall therefore here appeal to your conſciences, whether you have not found theſe Events of Providence falling out agreeable in all reſpects with the Word.

1. The Word tells you, that it is your Wiſdom and Intereſt, to keep cloſe to its rules, and the duties it preſcribes, that the way of holineſs and obedience, is the wiſeſt way, Deut. 4. 5, 6. *This is your wiſdom.*

Now let the events of Providence ſpeak, whether this be true or not. Certainly it will appear to be ſo, whether we reſpect our *preſent comfort*, or *future happineſs*, both which we may

ſee

ſee daily expoſed by departure from Duty, and ſecured by keeping cloſe to it. Let the queſtion be asked of the *Drunkard*, *Adulterer*, or prophane *Swearer*, when by Sin they have ruined Body, Soul, Eſtate and Name, whether it be their Wiſdom to walk in thoſe forbidden Paths after their own Luſts? Whether they had not better conſulted their own Intereſt and Comfort, in keeping within the Bounds and Limits of Gods Commands? And they cannot but confeſs, that *this their Way is their Folly. What Fruit* (ſaith the Apoſtle) *had ye in thoſe Things, whereof you are now aſhamed? For the end of thoſe Things is Death*, Rom. 6. 21. Doth not the Providence of God verifie upon them thoſe threatnings that are Written, in the Experience of all Ages? *Prov.* 23. 29. *Prov.* 23. 21. *Prov.* 5. 9. *Job* 31. 12. *Prov.* 5. 10. All which Woes and Miſeries they eſcape, that walk in Gods Statutes. Look upon the ruined Eſtates and Bodies you may every where ſee, and behold the Truth of the Scriptures evidently made good in thoſe ſad Providences.

2. The Word tells you, that your departure from the way of Integrity and Simplicity, to make uſe of ſinful Policies, ſhall never Profit you, 1 *Sam.* 12. 21. *Prov.* 3. 5.

Let the Events of Providence ſpeak to this alſo; ask your own Experience, and you ſhall have a full Confirmation of this Truth. Did you ever leave the way of Simplicity and Integrity, and uſe ſinful ſhifts, to bring about your own deſigns, and proſper in that way? Certainly God hath curſed all the Ways of Sin; and whoever finds them to thrive with them, his People ſhall not. *Iſrael* would not rely upon the Lord, but truſt in the ſhadow of *Egypt*; and what Advantage

had they by this ſinful Policy? See *Iſa.* 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. *David* uſed a great deal of ſinful Policy to cover his wicked Fact; but did it proſper? See 2 *Sam.* 12. 12. It is an excellent Note of *Livy*, *Conſilia callida, primâ ſpecie læta, tractatu dura, eventu triſtia.* Sinful policies in their firſt Appearances, are pleaſant and promiſing, in their management difficult, in their event ſad. Some by ſinful Ways have gotten Wealth; but that Scripture hath been verified in their Experience, *Prov.* 10. 2. *Treaſures of Wickedneſs profit nothing.* Either God hath blown upon it by a ſecret Curſe, that it hath done them no good, or given them ſuch diſquietneſs in their Conſciences, that they have been forced to vomit it up, e're they could find Peace, *Job* 11. 13, 14, 15.

That which *David* gave in charge to *Solomon*, hath been found experimentally true by thouſands, 1 *Chron.* 22. 12, 13. That the true way to Proſperity, is to keep cloſe to the Rule of the Word. And that the true Reaſon why Men cannot Proſper, is their forſaking that Rule, 2 *Chron.* 24. 20.

It's true, if God have a purpoſe to deſtroy a Man, he may for a time ſuffer him to ſucceed and proſper in his Sin, for his greater hardening, *Job* 12. 6. But it is not ſo with thoſe whom the Lord loves; their ſinful ſhifts ſhall never thrive with them.

3. The Word prohibits your *truſt* and *confidence* in the *Creature*, even the greateſt and moſt powerful among Creatures, *Pſalm* 146. 3. It tells us, that 'tis better to truſt in the Lord, than in them, *Pſalm* 118. 8. It forbids our Confidence in thoſe Creatures that are moſt nearly ally'd, and related in the Bonds of Nature to us, *Micah* 7. 5. It

Curſeth

Curseth the Man that gives that relyance to the Creature, which is due to God, *Jer.* 17. 5.

Consult the Events of Providence in this Case, and see whether the Word be not verified therein? Did you ever lean upon an *Egyptian* Reed, and it did not break under you, and pierce as well as deceive you? O how often hath this been evident in our Experience! Whatsoever we have over-loved, idolized, and leaned upon, God hath from Time to Time broken it, and made us to see the Vanity of it; so that we find, the readiest course to be rid of our Comforts, is to set our Hearts inordinately or immoderatly upon them: For our God is a jealous God, and will not part with his Glory to another. The World is full of Examples of Persons deprived of their Comforts, Husbands, Wives, Children, Estates, *&c.* upon this account, and by this means. If *Jonah* be over-joyed in his Gourd, a *Worm* is presently prepared to smite it. Hence it is, that so many Graves are opened for the Burying of our *Idols* out of our sight. If *David* say, *My mountain shall stand strong, I shall not be moved*; the next news he shall hear, is of Darkness and Trouble, *Psalm* 30. 6, 7. O how true and faithful do we find these sayings of God to be! Who cannot put to his Seal, and say, *Thy Words are Truth?*

4. The Word assures us, that Sin is the Cause and Inlet of Affliction and Sorrow, and that there is an inseparable Connection betwixt them, *Numb.* 32. 23. *Be sure your Sin will find you out*: (*i. e.*) the sad Effects and Afflictions that follow it shall find you out. So *Psalm* 89. 30, 31, 32. *If his Sons forsake my Law,—I will visit their Iniquities with Rods.*

Enquire now at the Mouth of Providence, whe-

ther this be indeed ſo, according to the Report of the Word. Ask but your own Experience and you ſhall find, that juſt ſo Providence hath ordered it all along your way. When did you grow into a ſecure, vain, carnal frame, but you found ſome rouzing, ſtartling Providence ſent to awaken you? When did you wound your Conſciences with guilt, and God did not wound you for it, in ſome or other of your beloved enjoyments? Nay, ſo ordinary is this with God, that from the Obſervations of their own Frames and Ways, many Chriſtians have fore-boded and preſaged Troubles at Hand.

I do not ſay, that God never afflicts his People, but for their Sin; for he may do it for their Tryal, 1 *Pet.* 4. 12. Nor do I ſay, that God follows every Sin with a Rod; for who then ſhould ſtand before him? *Pſalm* 130. 3. But this I ſay, that it's Gods uſual way, to viſit the Sins of his People with Rods of Affliction, and this in Mercy to their Souls. Upon this account it was, that the Rod of God was upon *David* in a long Succeſſion of Troubles upon his Kingdom and Family, after that great Prevarication of his, 2 *Sam.* 12. 10. And if we would carefully ſearch out the Seeds and Principles of thoſe Miſeries under which we or ours do groan; we ſhould find them to be our own turnings aſide from the Lord, according to that *Jer.* 2. 19. and *Jer.* 4. 18. Have not all theſe Cautions, and threatnings of the Word been exactly fulfilled by Providence in your own Experience? Who can but ſee the infallible Truth of God in all that he hath threatned! And no leſs evident is the Truth of the Promiſes to all that will obſerve how Providence makes them good every Day to us; for conſider,

5. How

5. How great Security God hath given to his People in the Promises, that no Man shall lose any thing by self-denial for his Sake. He hath told us, Mark 10. 29, 30. *Verily, I say unto you, there is no Man that hath left House, or Brethren, or Sisters, or Father, or Mother, or Wife, or Children, or Lands for my sake, and the Gospels; but he shall receive an hundred fold now in this Time, Houses, and Brethren and Sisters, and Mothers, and Children, and Lands with Persecutions, and in the World to come Eternal Life.*

Though that vile Apostate *Julian* derided this Promise, yet thousands and ten thousands have experienced it, and do at this Day stand ready to set their Seal to it. God hath made it good to his People, not only in *Spirituals*; inward Joy, and Peace; but even in *Temporals* also: Instead of natural Relations who took care for them before, hundreds of *Christians* shall stand ready to assist and help them: So that though they have left all for *Christ*, yet they may say with the *Apostle*, 2 Cor. 6. 10. *As having nothing, and yet possessing all Things.* O the admirable Care and Tenderness of Providence over those that for Conscience sake have left all, and cast themselves upon its immediate Care! Are there not at this Day to be found many so provided for, even to the Envy of their Enemies, and their own Admiration? Who sees not the faithfulness of God in the Promises, that hath but an Heart to trust God in them!

6. The Word of Promise assures us, that whatever wants or straits the Saints fall into, their God *will never leave them, nor forsake them*, Heb. 13. 5. That he *will be with them in Trouble*, Psal. 91. 15.

Consult the various Providences of your Life in this Point, and I doubt not, but you will find the Truth of these Promises as often confirmed, as you have been in trouble. Ask your own Hearts, where, or when was it that your God forsook you, and left you to sink and perish under your Burdens? I doubt not, but most of you have been at one time or other plunged in difficulties, difficulties out of which you could see no way of escape by the Eye of Reason; yea, such, as it may be, staggered your Faith in the Promise, as *David*'s was, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1. when he said, *I shall one Day perish by the Hand of Saul. All Men are Lyars*, (even *Samuel* himself) and yet notwithstanding all, we see him emerge out of that Sea of Trouble, and the Promises made good in every Tittle to him. The like doubtless you may observe in your own Cases. Ask your own Souls the question, and they will satisfie it. Did God abandon and cast you off in the Day of your straits? Certainly you must belye your own Experience, if you should say so. 'Tis true, there have been some plunges and difficulties you have met with, wherein (1.) You could see no way of escape, but concluded you must perish in them. (2.) Difficulties that have staggered your Faith in the Promises, and made your doubt, whether the Fountain of All-sufficiency would let out it self for your relief. (3.) Yea, such difficulties as have provoked you to murmuring and impatience, and thereby provoked the Lord to forsake you in your straits; but yet you see he did not. He hath either (1.) Strengthened your back to bear, or (2.) Lightened your burden, or (3.) Opened an unexpected door of escape, according to that Promise, 1 *Cor.* 10. 13. so that the evil which you feared, came not upon you.

Summa hæc est, cum omnia bona suppeditentur a deo in omnibus vitæ humanæ ordinibus nostri officii erit, in calamitatibus nos erigere consideratione Providentiæ divinæ. Alsted. Theol. Catechet. p. 192.

(7)

7. You read, that the Word of God is the only support and relief to a gracious Soul in the dark Day of Affliction, *Psalm* 119. 50, 92. ——— 2 *Sam.* 23. 5. That for this very Purpose it was Written, *Rom.* 15. 4. No rules of moral Prudence, no sensual remedies can perform that for us, which the Word can do.

And is not this a sealed Truth, attested by a thousand of undeniable experiences? Hence have the Saints fetcht their *Cordials*, when fainting under the Rod. One Word of God can do more than ten thousand Words of Men to relieve a distressed Soul. If Providence have at any time directed you to such Promises, as either assure you that the Lord will be with you in trouble, *Psalm* 91. 15. Or that encourage you from inward Peace, to bear chearfully outward burdens, *John* 16. 33. or satisfie you of Gods tenderness and moderation in his dealings with you, *Isa.* 27. 8. Or that you shall reap blessed Fruits from them, *Rom.* 8. 28. Or that clear up your interest in God, and his Love under your Afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 7. 14. Oh, what sensible ease and relief ensues! How light is your burden, compared with what it was before!

8. The Word tells us, that there is no such way to improve our Estates, as to lay them out with a chearful liberality for God; and that our withholding our Hands, when God and Duty calls to distribute, will not be for our Advantage. See *Prov.* 11. 25. *Isa.* 32. 8. *Prov.* 19. 17. *Prov.* 11. 24.

Consult Providence now, and you shall find it in all respects according to the Report of the Word. O how true is the Scripture Testimony herein! There are many thousand Witnesses now living, that can set their Seals to both Parts of

this Propoſition. What Men ſave (as they count ſaving) with one Hand, Providence ſcatters by another Hand: And what they ſcatter abroad with a liberal Hand and ſingle Eye for God, is ſurely repay'd to them or theirs. Never did any Man loſe by diſtributing for God. He that lends to the poor *fœneratur Domino*, as ſome expound that Text, puts his Money to Intereſt to the Lord. Some have obſerved how Providence hath doubled all they have laid out for God, in Ways unexpected to them.

9. The Word aſſures us, that the beſt Expedient for a Man to ſettle his own Intereſt in the Conſciences and Affections of Men, is to direct his Ways, ſo as to pleaſe the Lord, *Prov.* 16. 7. and doth not Providence confirm it? This the three *Jews* found by Experience, *Dan.* 3. 28, 29. and ſo did *Daniel*, chap. 6. *v.* 20, 21, 22. This kept up *John*'s Reputation in the Conſcience of *Herod*, *Mark* 6. 20. So it fell out, when *Conſtantius* made that exploratory decree; thoſe that were Conſcientious were preferred, and thoſe that changed their Religion, expelled. Never did any Man loſe at laſt by his Fidelity.

10. The written Word tells us, that the beſt expedient to inward Peace and Tranquillity of mind under puzzling and diſtracting Troubles, is to commit our ſelves and our Caſe to the Lord; ſo you read, *Pſalm* 37. 5, 6, 7. and *Prov.* 16. 3.

And as you have read in the Word, ſo you have found it in your own Experience. Oh, what a burden is off your Shoulders, when you have reſigned the Caſe to God! Then doth Providence iſſue your Affairs comfortably for you. The difficulty is ſoon over, when the Heart is brought to this.

Thus

Thus you see, how Scriptures are fulfilled by Providence in these few Instances I have given of it. Compare them in all other Cases, and you shall find the same: For all the Lines of Providence lead from the Scripture, and return thither again, and do most visibly begin and end there.

The Fourth Direction.

In all your Reviews and Observations of Providence, be sure that you Eye God as the Author or Orderer of them all, Prov. 3. 6.

1. In all the *comfortable* Providences of your lives, Eye God as the *Author* or Donor of them. Remember he is *the Father of Mercies*, that begets every Mercy for you, 2 *Cor.* 1. 3. *The God of all Comfort*, without whose Order no Mercy or Comfort can come to your Hands. And think it not enough thus to acknowledge him in a general Way; but when you receive Mercies, take special Notice of the following Particulars.

(1.) Eye the Care of God for you, 1 *Pet.* 5. 7. *He careth for you. Your Father knows you have need of these Things*, Matth. 6. 32. It is but to acquaint him what you want, and your wants are supplied, *Phil.* 4. 6. μὴ μεριμνᾶτε, torture not your selves about it: You have a Father that Cares for you.

(2.) Eye the Wisdom of God, in the Way of dispensing his Mercies to you, how *suitably* they are ordered to your Condition, and how seasonably. When one Comfort is cut off and removed, another is raised up in its room. Thus *Isaac* was comforted in *Rebecka* after his *Mothers* Death, *Gen.* 24. 67.

(3.) Eye

(3.) Eye the Free Grace of God in them, yea ſee Riches of Grace in every bequeſt of Comfort to ſo vile and unworthy Creatures as you are. See your ſelves over-topt by the leaſt of all your Mercies, *Gen.* 32. 10. *I am not worthy of the leaſt*, ſaid *Jacob*.

(4.) Eye the Condeſcenſion of God, to your Requeſts for thoſe Mercies, *Pſalm* 34. 6. This is the ſweeteſt bit in any Enjoyment, in which a Man can ſenſibly reliſh the return and anſwer of his Prayers, and greatly inflames the Souls Love to God, *Pſalm* 116. 1.

(5.) Eye the Deſign and End of God in all your Comforts. Know that it is not ſent to ſatisfie the cravings of your ſenſual appetite, but to quicken and enable you for a more chearful diſcharge of your Duty, *Deut.* 28. 47.

(6.) Eye the Way and Method in which your Mercies are conveyed to you. They all flow to you through the Blood of *Chriſt* and *Covenant* of Grace, 1 *Cor.* 3. 22, 23. Mercies derive their ſweetneſs from the Channel through which they run to us.

(7.) Eye the diſtinguiſhing Goodneſs of God, in all the comfortable Enjoyments of your Lives. How many thouſand better than you, are denied thoſe Comforts? See *Heb.* 11. 37.

(8.) Eye them all as Comforts appointed to refreſh you in your way to far better and greater Mercies than themſelves. The beſt Mercies are ſtill reſerved till laſt, and all theſe are introductive to better.

2. In all the Sad and Afflictive Providences that befal you, Eye God as the Author and Orderer of them alſo. So he repreſents himſelf to us, *Jer.* 18. 11. *Behold, I create evil, and deviſe a de-*

vice

vice against you. And *Amos* 3. 6. *Is there evil in the City, and the Lord hath not done it?* More particularly,

1. Set before you the *Soveraignty* of God. Eye him as a Being infinitely Superiour to you, at whose Pleasure, you, and all you have is, *Psalm* 115. 3. which is the most conclusive Reason and Argument of Submission, *Psal.* 46. 10. For if we, and all we have, proceeded from his Will, how equal is it, that we be resigned up to it? It is not many Years agon since we were not, and when it pleased him to bring us upon the Stage of action, we had no Liberty of indenting with him, on what terms we would come into the World; or refuse to be, except we might have our being on such Terms as we desired. His Soveraignty is gloriously displayed in his *Eternal Decrees and Temporal Providences.* He might have put you into what rank of Creatures he pleased. He might have made you the most despicable Creatures, *Worms* or *Toads:* Or, if Men, the most vile, abject and miserable among Men: And when you had run through all the Miseries of this Life, have damned you to Eternity, made you miserable for ever, and all this without any wrong to you. And shall not this quiet us under the common afflictions of this Life?

2. Set the *Grace* and *Goodness* of God before you in all afflictive Providences. O see him passing by you in the cloudy and dark Day, proclaiming his Name, *the Lord, the Lord merciful and gracious.* There are two sorts of Mercies that are seldom eclipsed by the darkest Affliction that befals the Saints in their temporal concerns, *sc. sparing mercy* in this World, and *saving Mercy* in that to come. It is not so bad now as it might, and we de-

deſerved it ſhould be, and it will be better hereafter. This the Church obſerved, and reaſoned her ſelf quiet from it, *Lam.* 3. 22. Hath he taken ſome? he might have taken all. Are we afflicted? It's Mercy we are not deſtroyed. Oh if we conſider what Temporal Mercies are yet ſpared, and what Spiritual Mercies are beſtowed, and yet continued to us, we ſhall find cauſe to admire Mercy, rather than complain of Severity.

3. Eye the Wiſdom of God in all your Afflictions, behold it in the choice of the *kind* of your affliction, this, and not another: The *Time*, now and not at another ſeaſon: The *Degree*, in this meaſure only, and not in a greater: The *Supports* afforded you under it, not left altogether helpleſs: The *Iſſue* to which it's over-ruled, it's to your good, not ruine. Look upon all theſe, and then ask thy Heart that queſtion God askt *Jonah*, *Doſt thou well to be angry?* Surely, when you conſider all, what need you had of theſe Rods, that your Corruptions will require all this, it may be much more to mortifie them; that without the periſhing of theſe things, you might have periſhed for ever; you will ſee great Reaſon to be quiet and well ſatisfied under the Hand of God.

4. Set the *faithfulneſs* of the Lord before you under the ſaddeſt Providences. So did *David* *Pſalm* 119. 75. This is according to his Covenant faithfulneſs, *Pſalm* 89. 32. Hence it is, that the Lord will not withhold a Rod when need requires it, 1 *Pet* 1. 6. Nor will he forſake his People under the Rod, when he inflicts it, 2 *Cor.* 4. 9.

Oh what quietneſs will this breed! I ſee my God will not loſe my Heart, if a Rod can prevent it; he had rather hear me groan here, than howl

howl hereafter: His Love is judicious, not Fond: He Consults my *Good*, rather than my *Ease*.

6. Eye the *All-sufficiency* of God in the Day of affliction. See enough in him still, whatever be gone. Here is the *Fountain* still as full as ever, though this or that *Pipe* be cut off, which was wont to convey somewhat of it to me. O Christians, can't you make up any loss this way? Can't you see more in God, than in any or all the Creature Comforts you have lost? With what Eyes then do you look upon God?

6. *Lastly*, Eye the *Immutability* of God. Look on him as the Rock of Ages, *James* 1. 17. *The Father of Lights, with whom is no variableness, nor shadow of turning.* Eye *Jesus Christ*, as *the same yesterday, to Day and for ever.* Oh how quietly will you then behave your selves under the changes of Providence? It may be, two or three Days have made a sad change in your Condition: The Death of a dear Relation hath turned all Things upside down: That Place is empty where lately they were, as it is, *Job.* 7. 10. *His Place shall know him no more:* Well, but God is what he was, and where he was: Time shall make no change upon him, as it is in *Isa.* 40. 6, 7, 8. *The Grass withereth, the flower Fadeth; but the Word of the Lord abideth for ever.* O how composing are those views of God to our Spirits under dark Providences.

The Fifth Direction.

Lastly, *Work up your Hearts to those Frames, and Exercise those Affections which the several Providences of God that are versant about you call for*, Eccles. 7. 14. Suit your selves to answer the De-

Deſign and End of God in all Providences. As there are various affections planted in your Souls, ſo are there ſeveral Graces planted in thoſe affections, and ſeveral Providences appointed to draw forth, and exerciſe theſe Graces.

1. When the Providences of God are ſad, and afflictive either upon the Church in General, or your Families and Perſons in particular, *then it is ſeaſonable for you to exerciſe Godly Sorrow and Humility of Spirit:* For in that Day, and by thoſe Providences God doth call to it, *Iſa.* 22. 12. *Micah* 6. 9. Now, ſenſitive Pleaſure and natural Joy, is out of ſeaſon, *Ezek.* 21. 10. *Should we then make mirth?* If there be either, (1.) A filial ſpirit in us, we cannot be light and vain, when our *Father* is angry; or (2.) If any real ſenſe of the evil of Sin which provokes Gods anger, we muſt be heavy hearted when God is ſmiting for it, or (3.) If any Senſe and Compaſſion for the miſeries that Sin brings upon the World, it will make us to ſay with *David*, Pſalm 119. 158. *I beheld the Tranſgreſſors and was grieved.* 'Tis ſad to conſider the Miſeries that they pull down upon themſelves in this World and that to come. (4.) If there be any care in us to prevent utter Ruine, and ſtop God in the Way of his anger, we know this is the means to do it, *Amos* 4. 12.

How ſad and diſmal ſoever the Face of Providence be, yet ſtill maintain ſpiritual Joy and Comfort in God under all. Though there be no Herd in the Stall (ſaid *Habakkuk*, chap. 3. 17.) *yet will I rejoyce in the Lord, I will Joy in the God of my Salvation.*

There are two ſorts of Comforts, *Natural* and *Senſitive*, *Divine* and *Spiritual.* There is a time when it becomes *Chriſtians* to exerciſe both; ſo

Eſth.

Esth. 9. 22. And there is a Time when the former is to be suspended and laid by, *Psalm* 137. 2. But there is no Season, wherein spiritual Joy and Comfort in God is unseasonable, as appears by those Scriptures, 1 *Thess.* 5. 16. *Phil.* 4. 4. This spiritual Joy or Comfort, is nothing else but the cheerinesse of our Heart in God, and the Sense of our Interest in him, and in his Promises. And it's sure, that no Providence can render this unseasonable to a Christian. Let us suppose the most afflicted and calamitous State a Christian can be incident to, yet,

(1.) Why should sad Providence make him lay by his Comforts in God? When as those are but for a Moment, but these Eternal, 2 *Cor.* 4. 17.

(2.) Why should we lay by our Joy in God, upon the account of sad Providences without, when at the very worst and lowest Ebb, the Saints have infinitely more cause to rejoce, than to be cast down? There's more in one of their Mercies to Comfort them, than in all their Troubles to deject them. All your losses are but as the loss of a *farthing* to a Prince, *Rom.* 8. 18.

(3.) Why should they be sad, as long as their God is with them in all their troubles? As *Christ* said, *Matth.* 9. 15. *Can the Children of the Bride-Chamber be sad, whilest the Bridegroom is with them?* So say I, Can the Soul be sad, whilest God is with it? Oh methinks, that one Promise, *Psalm* 91. 15. *I will be with him in trouble*, should bear you up under all Burdens. Let them be cast down, that have no God in Trouble to turn to.

(4.) Why should they be sad, as long as no outward Dispensation of Providence, (be it never so sad) can be interpreted as a mark or sign of

of Gods Hatred or Enmity, *Eccl.* 9. 2, 3. *There is one event to the Righteous and Wicked.* Indeed, if it were a Signification of the Lords Wrath againſt a Man, it would juſtifie our Dejection; but this cannot be ſo: His Heart is full of Love, whileſt the Face of Providence is full of Frowns.

(5.) Why ſhould we be caſt down under ſad Providences, whilſt we have ſo great Security, that even by the Hands of theſe Providences God will do us good, and all theſe things ſhall *turn to our Salvation?* Rom. 8. 28. By theſe God is but killing your Luſts, weaning your Hearts from a vain World, preventing Temptations, and exciting your Deſires after Heaven; this is all the hurt they ſhall do you, and ſhall that ſadden us?

(6.) Why ſhould we lay by our Joy in God, when as the change of our Condition is ſo nigh? It's but a little while, and ſorrows ſhall flee away: You ſhall never ſuffer more: *God will wipe away all Tears*, Rev. 7. 17. Well then, you ſee there's no Reaſon upon the account of Providence, to give up your Joy and Comfort in God. But if you will maintain it under all Providences, then be careful.

(1.) To Clear up your Intereſt in, and Title to God. *Faith* may be ſeperated from Comfort, but Aſſurance cannot.

(2.) Mortifie your inordinate Affections to earthly Things. This makes Providences that deprive and croſs us ſo heavy. Mortifie your Opinion and Affection, and you ſenſibly lighten your Affliction. It is ſtrong Affection that makes ſtrong Affliction.

(3.) Dwell much upon the Meditation of the Lords near approach; and then all theſe Things will ſeem but trifles to you. *Let your Moderation*

on be known unto all Men, the Lord is at Hand.

3. *Exercise heavenly Mindedness, and keep your Hearts upon things Eternal, under all the Providences with which the Lord exercises you in this World*, Gen. 6. 9. *Noah* walked with God, yet met with as sad Providences in his Day, as any Man that ever lived since his Time. But alas! we find most Providences, rather *stops*, than *steps* in our walk with God. If we be under comfortable Providences, how sensual, wanton and worldly do our Hearts grow! And if sad Providences befal us, how dedolent or distracted are we! And this comes to pass partly through the *narrowness*, but mostly, through the *deceitfulness* of our Spirits. Our Hearts are narrow, and know not how to manage two businesses of such different Natures, as Earthly and Heavenly Matters are without Detriment to one. *Pectora nostra duas curas non admittunt.* But certainly such a frame of Spirit is attainable that will enable us to keep on in an even and steddy course with God, whatever befal us. Others have attained it, and why not we? Prosperous Providences are for the most part a dangerous State to the Soul. The *Moon* never suffers an *Eclipse*, but at full; yet *Jehoshaphat*'s Grace suffered no *Eclipse* from the fulness of his outward Condition, who *had Riches in abundance, and his Heart was lifted up in the way of Gods Commandments*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. *David*'s Life was as full of Cares, Turmoils, and Incumbrances, as most Men we read of; yet how spiritual the temper of his Heart was, that excellent *Book of Psalms*, (which was mostly composed amidst those Distractions) will acquaint us. The *Apostles* were cast into as great Necessities, and suffered as hard things, as ever Men did; yet

how raiſed and heavenly their Spirits were amidſt all, who ſees not? And certainly, if it were not poſſible to maintain Heavenly-mindedneſs in ſuch a ſtate and poſture of Affairs, God would never exerciſe any of his People with ſuch Providences: He would never give you ſo much of the World to loſe your Hearts in the Love of it, or ſo little to diſtract you with the Cares of it. If therefore we were more deeply ſanctified, and the tendencies of our Hearts Heaven-ward more ardent and vigorous; If we were more mortified to Earthly things, and could but keep our due Diſtance from them; our outward Conditions would not at this rate draw forth and exerciſe our inward Corruptions, nor would we hazard the loſs of ſo ſweet an Enjoyment as our fellowſhip with God is, for the ſake of any Concernment our Bodies have on Earth.

4. *Under all Providences maintain a contented Heart with what the Lord allots you, be it more or leſs of the Things of this World.* This Grace muſt run parallel with all Providences. *Learn how to be full, and how to ſuffer want, and in every ſtate to be content*, Phil. 4. 12.

In this Duty all Men are concerned at all Times, and in every State, not only the People of God, but even the unregenerate alſo. I will therefore addreſs ſome Conſiderations proper to both. And firſt to the unregenerate, to ſtop their Mouths from repining, and charging God fooliſhly, when Providence croſſes them. Let them ſeriouſly conſider theſe four Things.

(1.) That Hell and Eternal Damnation are the Portion of their Cup, according to the Tenor of Law and Goſpel threatnings. Whatſoever therefore is ſhort of this is to be admired as the Fruit

Fruit of Gods ſtupendious Patience, and forbearance towards them. Ah poor Souls! Know you not, that you are Men and Women condemned to Wrath by the plain Sentence of the Law? *Mark* 16. 16. *John* 3. 36. 2 *Theſſ.* 1. 6, 7. And if ſo, ſure there are other Matters to exerciſe your thoughts, deſires, fears and cares about than theſe. Alas! if you cannot bear a frown of Providence, a light croſs in theſe Things, how will you bear the Everlaſting Burnings! A Man that is to loſe his Head to Morrow, is not very ſolicitous what Bed he lies on, or how his Table is furniſht the Night before.

(2.) Conſider, though you be condemned Perſons, and have no Promiſe to entitle you to any Mercy; yet there are very many Mercies in your Poſſeſſion at this Day. Be your Condition as afflictive as it will, is Life nothing? Eſpecially conſidering whither you muſt ſink, when that Thread is cut. Are the neceſſary ſupports of Life nothing? Doth not Providence Miniſter to you theſe Things, though you daily diſoblige it, and provoke God to ſend you to your own Place? But, above all, is the *Goſpel* and precious Means of Salvation nothing, by which you yet are in a capacity of eſcaping the Damnation of Hell? O what would the damned ſay, if they were but put into your Condition once more? What! and yet fret againſt God, becauſe every thing elſe ſuits not your Deſires?

(3.) Conſider, that if ever you be reſcued out of that miſerable Condition you are in, ſuch croſs Providences, as theſe you complain of, are the moſt probable Means to do it. Alas! proſperity and ſucceſs is not the way to ſave, but deſtroy you, *Prov.* 1. 32. You muſt be bound in Fetters,

and holden in Cords of Affliction, if ever your Ear be opened to Inſtruction, *Job* 36. 8, 9, 10. Wo to you, if you go on ſmoothly in the way in which you are, and meet with no Croſſes.

(4.) *Laſtly*, Conſider, all your Troubles under which you complain, are pulled down upon your Heads by your own Sins. You turn Gods Mercies into Sin, and then fret againſt God, becauſe he turns your Sins into Sorrow. Your Ways and Doings procure theſe Things to you. Lay your Hand therefore upon your Mouth and ſay, *Why doth the living Man complain, a Man for the Puniſhment of his Sin*, Lam. 3. 39. But I muſt turn to the Lords People, who have leaſt pretences of all Men to be diſſatisfied with any of Gods Providences, and yet are but too frequently found in that temper. And to them I ſhall offer the following Conſiderations.

(1.) *Conſider your ſpiritual Mercies and Priviledges with which the Lord Jeſus hath inveſted you, and repine at your Lot of Providence if you can.* One of theſe Mercies alone, hath enough in it to ſweeten all your Troubles in this World. When the Apoſtle conſidered them, his Heart was overwhelmed with Aſtoniſhment; ſo that he could not forbear in the midſt of all his outward Troubles to cry out, *Bleſſed be the God and Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who hath abounded to us in all ſpiritual Bleſſings*, &c. *Eph.* 1. 3. Oh, who that ſees ſuch an Inheritance ſetled upon him in *Chriſt*, can ever open his Mouth more to repine at his Lot of Providence!

(2.) *Conſider your Sins, and that will make you contented with your Lot.* Yea, conſider two things in Sin. (1.) What it deſerves from God, and (2.) What it requires to mortifie and purge it in you

you. It deserves from God Eternal Ruine: The Merit of Hell is in the least vain Thought. Every Sin forfeits all the Mercies you have; and if so, rather wonder your Mercies are so many, than that you have no more. Besides, you cannot doubt, but your Corruptions require all the Crosses, Wants and Troubles that are upon you, and it may be, a great deal more, to mortifie and subdue them. Don't you find, after all the Rods that have been upon you, a proud Heart still, a vain and earthly Heart still? Oh how many bitter Potions are but necessary to purge out this tough malignant Humour!

(3.) *Consider how near you are to the Change of your Condition:* Have but a little Patience, and all will be as well with you as your Hearts can desire. It is no small Comfort to the Saints, that this World is the worst Place that ever they shall be in: Things will better every Day with them. If the *Traveller* have spent all his Money, yet it doth not much trouble him, if he know himself within a few Miles of his own home. If there be no *Candles* in the House, we do not much Matter it, if we are sure it's almost break of Day; for then there will be no use for them. This is your Case; *Your Salvation is nearer than when you believed*, Rom. 13. 11.

I have done with the directive Part of this Discourse; but before I pass to this fifth Head, I judge it necessary to leave a few Cautions to prevent the abuse of Providence, and your miscarriages in your behaviour towards it. And

First Caution.

If Providence delay the Performance of any Mercy to you, that you have long waited and prayed for;

yet see, that you despond not; nor grow weary of waiting upon God for that Reason. It pleases the Lord oftentimes to try and exercise his People this way, and make them cry, *How long Lord, how long?* Psalm 13. 1, 2.

These delaies both upon Spiritual and Temporal accounts are frequent, and when they befal us, we are too apt to interpret them as denials, and fall into a sinful Despondency of Mind, though there be no cause at all for it, *Psalm* 31. 12. *Lam.* 3. 8, 44. It is not always that the returns of Prayer are dispatcht to us in the same Hour they are asked of God; yet sometimes it falls out so, *Isa* 65. 24. *Dan.* 9. 23. But though the Lord means to perform to us the Mercies we desire; yet he will ordinarily Exercise our Patience to wait for them; and that for these Reasons.

(1.) Because *our* Time is not the *proper* Season for us to receive our Mercies in. Now the *season* of Mercy is a very great Circumstance that adds much to the value of it. God judges not as we do; we are all in haste, and will have it now, *Numb.* 22. 13. *But he is a God of Judgment, and blessed are they that wait for him,* Isa. 30. 18.

(2.) Afflictive Providences have not accomplished that design upon our Hearts they were sent for, when we are so earnest and impatient for a change of them; and till then the Rod must not be taken off, *Isa.* 10. 12.

(3.) The more Prayers and Searchings of Heart come between our Wants and Supplies, our Afflictions and Reliefs, the sweeter are our Reliefs and Supplies thereby made to us, *Isa.* 25. 9. *This is our God, we have waited for him, and he will save us; This is the Lord we have waited for him, we will rejoyce and be glad in his Salvation.* This recompenses

compenſes the delay, and pays us for all the expences of our Patience.

But though there be ſuch weighty Reaſons for the ſtop and delay of refreſhing comfortable Providences; yet we cannot bear it, our hands hang down and we faint, *Pſal.* 69. 3. *I am weary of my crying, my Throat is dry, mine Eyes fail while I wait for my God.* For alas! we judge by Senſe and Appearance, and conſider not, that Gods *Heart* may be *towards* us, whilſt the *Hand* of his Providence ſeems to be *againſt* us. If Things continue at one rate with us, we think our Prayers are loſt, and our Hopes periſhed from the Lord: much more when Things grow worſe and worſe, and our darkneſs and trouble encreaſes, as uſually it doth juſt before the break of Day and change of our Condition, then we conclude, God is angry with our Prayers. See *Gideon*'s Reply, *Judges* 6. 13. This even ſtaggered a *Moſes*'s Faith, *Exod.* 5. 22, 23. O what groundleſs Jealouſies and Suſpicions of God are found at ſuch Times in the Hearts of his own Children! *Job* 9. 16, 17. *Pſal.* 77. 7, 8, 9.

But this is our great evil, and to prevent it in future Tryals, I will offer a few proper Conſiderations in the Caſe.

1. The delay of your Mercies, is really for your Advantage. You read *Iſa.* 30. 18. *The Lord waits that he may be Gracious.* What is that? Why, it's nothing elſe but the Time of his Preparation of Mercies for you, and your Hearts for Mercy, that ſo you may have it with the greateſt Advantage of Comfort. The fooliſh Child would pluck the Apple while it's green; but when it's Ripe, it drops of its own accord, and is more pleaſant and wholſome.

2. It's a greater Mercy, to have an Heart willing to refer all to God, and be at his diſpoſe; than to enjoy preſently the Mercy we are moſt eager and impatient for. In that God pleaſes *you*, in this you pleaſe *God*. A Mercy may be given you as the Fruit of common Providence; but ſuch a Temper of Heart is the Fruit of ſpecial Grace. So much as the Glorifying of God is better than the Content and Pleaſure of the Creature, ſo much is ſuch a Frame better, than ſuch a Fruition.

3. Expected Mercies are never nearer, than when the Hearts and Hopes of Gods People are loweſt. Thus in their deliverance out of *Egypt*, and *Babylon*, Ezek. 37. 11. So we have found it in our own perſonal concerns: *At Evening Time it ſhall be Light*, Zach. 14. 7. When we look for increaſing Darkneſs, Light ariſes.

4. Our unfitneſs for Mercy, is the reaſon why they are delayed ſo long. We put the blocks into the Way of Mercy, and then Repine, that they make no more haſte to us, *Iſa.* 59. 1, 2. *The Lords hand is not ſhortned, but our Iniquities have ſeparated betwixt him and us.*

5. Conſider, the Mercies you wait for, are the Fruits of pure Grace, you deſerve them not, nor can claim them upon any Title of deſert; and therefore have Reaſon to wait for them in a patient and thankful Frame.

6. Conſider, how many *Millions* of Men as good as you by Nature, are cut off from all Hope and Expectation of Mercy for ever, and there remains to them nothing but *a fearful Expectation of Wrath*. This might have been your Caſe; and therefore be not of an impatient Spirit under the Expectations of Mercy.

Second

Second Caution.

Pry not too curiously into the secrets of Providence, nor suffer your shallow Reason arrogantly to judge and censure its Designs.

There be hard Texts in the *Works*, as well as in the *Word* of God. It becomes us modestly and humbly to *Reverence*, but not to *Dogmatize* too boldly and positively upon them: A Man may easily get a Strain by over-reaching. *When I thought to know this* (saith *Asaph*) *it was too wonderful for me.* I thought to know this, there was the arrogant attempt of Reason, there he pryed into the *Arcana* of Providence; but it was too wonderful for me, it was *labor inutilis*, as *Calvin* expounds it. He pryed so far into that puzzling Mystery of the *Afflictions* of the *Righteous*, and *Prosperity* of the *Wicked*, till it begat *Envy* towards *them*, and *despondency* in *himself*, Psalm 73. 3, 13. And this was all he got by summoning Providence to the Bar of Reason. Holy *Job* was guilty of this Evil, and ingenuously ashamed of it, *Job* 42. 3.

Scriptura opposuit hic curiositati nostræ repagulaquædam, quæ perfringere nemini licet, neque potest; cui non sit constitutum deum in judicium vocare: hinc est quod judicia dei dicuntur ἀνεξιχνίασα, ne se frustra fatiget non sine summo periculo in eo investigandomens humana. Cameronis prælect. p. 112.

I know, there is nothing in the Word or in the Works of God, that is repugnant to sound Reason: But there are some things in both, which are opposite to carnal Reason; as well as above right Reason; and therefore our Reason never shews it self more unreasonable, than in summoning those things to its Bar, which transcend its Sphere and Capacity. Manifold are the mischiefs which ensue upon this Practice.

1. By this we are drawn into an unworthy suspicion and distrust of the faithfulness of God in the Promises. *Sarah* laught at the Tydings of the Son of Promise, because Reason contradicted, and told

told her, it was naturally impoſſible, *Gen.* 18. 13, 14.

2. Hence comes deſpondency of Mind, and faintneſs of Heart under afflictive Providences; Reaſon can diſcern no good Fruits in them, nor deliverance from them, and ſo our Hands hang down in a ſinful diſcouragement, ſaying, all theſe things are againſt us, 1 *Sam.* 27. 1.

3 Hence flow Temptations to deliver our ſelves by indirect and ſinful *Mediums*, Iſa. 30. 15, 16. When our own Reaſon fills us with a diſtruſt of Providence, it naturally prompts us to ſinful ſhifts, and there leave us entangled in the ſnares of our own making.

Beware therefore you lean not too much to your own Reaſons and Underſtandings. Nothing is more plauſible, nothing more dangerous. In other Matters it is appointed the Arbiter and Judge, we make it ſo here, and therefore we are ſo diffident and diſtruſtful notwithſtanding the fulleſt Security of the Promiſes, whileſt our Reaſon ſtands by unſatisfied.

The Fifth Head.

Having given Direction for the due Management of this great and important Duty, what remains, but that we now ſet our Hearts to it, and make it the conſtant Work of every Day throughout our Lives? O what Peace, what pleaſure, what ſtability, what holy Courage and Confidence would reſult from ſuch an Obſervation of Providence as hath been directed to! But alas! we may ſay with Reference to the Voices of Divine Providence, as it is *Job* 33. 14. *God ſpeaketh once, yea twice, yet Man perceiveth it not.* Many a time Providence hath ſpoken *Inſtruction* in Duty, *Correc-*

tion

ction for iniquity, *Encouragement* under Despondency; but we regard it not. How greatly are we all wanting to our Duty, and Comfort by this neglect! It will be but needful therefore to spread before you, the loveliness and excellency of walking with God in a due and daily Observation of his Providences, that our Souls may be fully engaged to it.

First Motive.

And first, let me offer this, as a moving Argument to all Gracious Souls; *That by this means you may maintain sweet and sensible Communion with God from day to day.* And what is there desirable in this World, in comparison therewith! *Thou Lord hast made me glad through thy Works: I will triumph in the Works of thy Hands*, Psal. 92. 4. Your Hearts may be as sweetly and sensibly refresht by the Works of Gods Hands, as by the Words of his Mouth. *Psal.* 104. *per totum*, is spent in the Consideration of the Works of Providence, which so filled the *Psalmist*'s Heart, that, by Way of Ejaculation, he expresses the Effect of it, *Ver.* 34. *My Meditation of him shall be sweet.*

Communion with God properly and strictly taken, consists in two things; *viz.* Gods Manifestation of himself to the Soul, and the Souls answerable returns to God. This is that κοινωνία *Fellowship* we have here with *God.* Now *God* manifests himself to his *People* by *Providences* as well as Ordinances; neither is there any Grace in a sanctified *Soul* hid from the *gracious* Influences of his *Providential Manifestations.* Sometimes the *Lord* manifests his Displeasure and Anger against the Sins of his *People* in correcting and rebuking *Providences.* His *Rods* have a chiding *Voice,*

Voice, *Micah* 6. 9. *Hear the Rod and who hath appointed it.* This diſcovery of Gods Anger kindly melts and thaws a gracious Soul, and produces a double ſweet Effect upon it, namely, *Repentance* for Sins paſt, and due *Caution* againſt future Sins. (1.) It thaws and melts the Hearts for Sins committed. Thus *David*'s Heart was melted for his Sin, when the Hand of God was heavy upon him in Affliction, *Pſal.* 32. 4, 5. Thus the *Captive Church*, upon whom fell the ſaddeſt and moſt diſmal Providence that ever befel any of Gods People in any Age of the World; ſee how their Hearts are broken for Sin under this ſevere Rebuke, *Lam.* 2. 17, 18, 19. And then, (2.) For Caution againſt Sin for the Time to come; it's plain, that the rebukes of Providence leave that Effect alſo upon gracious Hearts, *Ezra* 9. 13, 14. *Pſalm* 85. 8.

Sometimes he Cheers and Comforts the Hearts of his People with ſmiling and reviving Providences, both Publick and Perſonal. There are Times of lifting up as well as caſting down by the Hand of Providence. The Scene Changes, the Aſpects of Providence are very cheerful and encouraging: Their Winter ſeems to be over: They put off their Garments of Mourning; and then, Ah, what ſweet returns are made to Heaven by gracious Souls! Doth God lift them up by Proſperity? They alſo will lift up their God by Praiſes. See *Pſal.* 18. *Title*, and *v.* 1, 2, 3. So *Moſes* and the People with him, *Exod.* 15. when God had delivered them from *Pharaoh*, how do they exalt him in a Song of Thankſgiving, which for the elegancy and ſpirituality of it, is made an Emblem of the Doxologies given to God in Glory by the Saints! *Rev.* 15. 3.

Upon the whole, whatever Effects our Communion

munion with God in any of his Ordinances doth use to produce upon our Hearts, the same we may observe to follow our conversing with him in his Providences. For,

1. It is usually found in the Experience of all the Saints, that in what Ordinance or Duty soever they have any sensible Communion with God, it naturally produces in their Spirits a deep Abasement and Humiliation from the Sense of Divine Condescensions to such vile poor Worms as we are. Thus *Abraham*, Gen. 18. 27. *I am but Dust and Ashes.* The same effect follows our converse with God in his Providences. Thus when God had in the Way of his Providence prospered *Jacob*, how doth he lay himself at the Feet of God, as a Man overwhelmed with the Sense of Mercy! See *Gen.* 32. 5, 10. *And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy Mercies, and of all the Truth which thou hast shewed thy Servant; for with my Staff I passed over this Jordan, and now am become two Bands.* Thus also it was with *David*, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *Who am I, and what is my Fathers House, that thou hast brought me hitherto!* And I doubt not, but some of you have found the like Frame of Heart upon you, that these Holy Men here expressed. Can you not remember when God lifted you up by Providence, how you cast down your selves before him, and have been viler in your own Eyes than ever! Why, thus do all gracious Hearts; What am I, that the Lord should do thus and thus for me! O that ever so great and Holy a God should thus be concerned for so vile and sinful a Worm!

(2.) Doth Communion with God in Ordinances, melt the Heart into Love to God? *Cant.* 2. 3, 4, 5. Why, so doth the Observation of his Providences also.

alſo. Never did any Man *Converſe* with *God* in *Works of Providence* aright, but found his Heart at ſome times melted into *Love* to the *God* of his Mercies, *Pſalm* 18. 1. compared with the Title. When *God* had delivered him from the Hand of *Saul*, and all his Enemies, he ſaid, *I will love thee O Lord my Strength*. Every Man *Loves* the Mercies of *God*, but a Saint *Love* the *God* of his Mercies. The Mercies of *God*, as they are the fewel of a wicked Man Luſts, ſo they are fewel to maintain a good Mans *Love* to *God*; not that their *Love* to *God* is grounded upon theſe external Benefits. Not thine, but thee, O *Lord*, is the *Motto* of a *Gracious Soul*; but yet theſe Things ſerve to *blow* up the flame of *Love* to *God* in their Hearts, and they find it ſo.

4. Doth *Communion* with *God* ſet the keeneſt Edge upon the *Soul* againſt Sin? You ſee it doth. And have a pregnant Inſtance of it in *Moſes*, when he had been with *God* in the *Mount* for Forty Days, and had there enjoyed *Communion* with him; when he came down and ſaw the *Calf* the *People* had made; ſee what an Holy *Paroxyſm* of Zeal and Anger it caſt his *Soul* into, *Exod.* 32. 19, 20. Why, the ſame Effect you may diſcern to *follow* the Saints *Converſe* with *God* in his *Providences*. What was that which pierced the Heart of *David* with ſuch a deep Senſe of the Evil of his Sin, which is ſo abundantly manifeſted in *Pſalm* 51. throughout? Why, if you look into the Title you ſhall find, it was the Effect of what *Nathan* had laid before him: And if you Conſult 2 *Sam.* 12. 7, 8, 9, 10. you ſhall find, it was the *Goodneſs* of *God* manifeſted to him in the ſeveral endearing *Providences* of his Life, which in this he had ſo evilly requited the *Lord* for,

r, that broke his Heart to pieces in the Senſe of : And I doubt not, but ſome of us have ſome-mes found the like Effects, by comparing *Gods* Ways and our own together.

4. Doth *Communion* with the *Lord* enlarge the Heart for Obedience and Service? Surely it is as Oyl to the Wheels, that makes them run on freely and nimbly their Courſe. Thus when *Iſaiah* had obtained a ſpecial *Manifeſtation* of *God*, and the *Lord* askt, *Whom ſhall I ſend?* He preſents a ready Soul for the Employment, *Iſa.* 6. 8. *Here am I, Lord, ſend me.* Why, the very ſame Effect follows ſanctified Providences, as you may ſee in *Jehoſaphat*, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. And in *David*, Pſalm 116. 12. O when a Soul conſiders what *God* hath done for him, he cannot chuſe but ſay, what ſhall I return? How ſhall I Anſwer theſe Engage-ents?

And thus you ſee, what ſweet Communion a ul may have with God in the way of his Pro-idences. O that you would thus walk with him! ow much of Heaven might be found on Earth his Way! And certainly, it will never repent the Lord he hath done you good, when his Mercies produce ſuch Effects upon your Hearts: He will ſay of every favour thus improved, it was ell beſtowed, and will rejoyce over you to do u good for ever.

Second Motive.

A great Part of the Pleaſure and Delight of the Chriſtian Life is made out of the Obſervations of Providence. It is ſaid, *Pſalm* 111. 2. *The Works of the Lord are great, ſought out of all them that have Pleaſure therein:* (*i. e.*) the Study of Providence is ſo ſweet and pleaſant, that it invites and

and allures the Soul to ſearch and dive into it. How pleaſant is it to a well tempered Soul to behold and obſerve,

(1.) The ſweet harmony and conſent of Divine Attributes in the iſſues of Providence! They may ſeem ſometimes to jarr and claſh, to part with each other, and go contrary Ways: But they only ſeem ſo to do; for in the winding up, they always meet and embrace each other, *Pſal.* 85. 10. *Mercy and Truth have met together: Righteouſneſs and Peace have kiſſed each other.* It is ſpoken with an immediate Reference to that ſignal Providence of *Iſrael's* Deliverance out of the *Babyloniſh* Captivity, and the ſweet Effects thereof: Wherein the Truth and Righteouſneſs of God in the Promiſes, did as it were kiſs and embrace the Mercy and Peace that was contained in the Performance of them, after they had ſeemed for ſeventy Years to be at a great diſtance from each other. For it is an alluſion to the uſual Demonſtrations of Joy and Gladneſs, that two dear Friends are wont to give and receive, after a long Abſence and Separation from each other: They no ſooner meet, but they ſmile, embrace and kiſs each other. Even thus it is here. The Word נפגשו may be, (and by ſome is) rendered, *have met us*, and that alſo is true; for when ever theſe bleſſed Promiſes and Performances meet and kiſs each other, they are alſo joyfully embraced and kiſſed by believing Souls. There is, I doubt not, a mediate Reference of this Scripture to the *Meſſiah* alſo, and our Redemption by him: In him it is that theſe Divine Attributes which before ſeemed to claſh and contradict one another in the buſineſs of our Salvation, have a ſweet Agreement and Accompliſhment. Truth and Righteouſneſs

Occurrunt nobis, Syriac.

ouſneſs do in him meet with Mercy and Peace in a bleſſed agreement. What a lovely ſight is this! and how pleaſant to behold! O it with *Habbakuk*, *chap.* 2. *v.* 3. we would but ſtand upon our Watch-Tower to take due obſervations of Providence; what rare proſpects might we have! *Luther* underſtands it of the Word of God, *q.d.* I will look into the Word, and obſerve there how God accompliſheth all things, and brings them to paſs, and how his works are the fulfilling of his Word. Others (as *Calvin*) underſtand it of mans own retiring thoughts and meditations, wherein a man carefully obſerves what purpoſes and deſigns God hath upon the World in general, or upon himſelf in particular, and how the Truth and Righteouſneſs of God in the Word work themſelves through all difficulties and impediments, and meet in the mercy, peace and happineſs of the Saints at laſt. Every Believer (take it in which ſenſe you will,) hath his *Watch Tower* as well as *Habbakuk*: and give me leave to ſay, it's an *Angelical employment* to ſtand upon it, and behold the conſent of Gods Attributes, the accompliſhment of his Ends, and our own happineſs in the work of Providence. For this is the very joy of the Angels and Saints in Heaven, to ſee Gods Ends wrought out, and his Attributes glorified in the mercy and peace of the Church, *Rev.* 14. 1, 2, 3. & 8.

(2.) And as it's a pleaſant ſight to ſee the harmony of Gods Attributes, ſo it is exceeding pleaſant to behold the reſurrection of our own prayers and hopes as from the dead. Why, this you may often ſee, if you will duly obſerve the works of Providence towards you. We hope

and pray for ſuch and ſuch mercies to the Church or to our ſelves; but God delaies the accompliſhment of our hopes, ſuſpends the anſwer of our prayers, and ſeems to ſpeak to us, as Hab. 2. 3. *For the viſion is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak and not lye: though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry:* but we have no patience to wait the time of the Promiſe, our hopes languiſh and dye in the interim; and we ſay with the deſponding Church, Lam. 3. 18. *Our hope is periſhed from the Lord*; but Oh, how ſweet and comfortable is it, to ſee theſe prayers fulfilled, after we have given up all expectation of them! May we not ſay of them, as the Scripture ſpeaks of the reſtoration of the Jews, it is even *life from the dead.* This was *David's* caſe, *Pſal.* 31. 22. he gave up his hopes and prayers for loſt, yet lived to ſee the comfortable and unexpected returns of them. And this was the caſe of *Job*, *chap.* 6. 11. he had given up all expectation of better days, and yet this man lived to ſee a reſurrection of all his loſt comforts with an advantage. Think how that change and unexpected turn of Providence affected his ſoul: it is with our hopes and prayers as with our *Alms*, *Caſt thy bread on the waters, for thou ſhalt find it after many days*, Eccleſ. 11. 1. or as it was with *Jacob*, who had given over all hopes of ever ſeeing his beloved *Joſeph* again, but when a ſtrange and unexpected Providence had reſtored that hopeleſs mercy to him again, Oh how raviſhing and tranſporting was it? *Gen.* 46. 29, 30.

(3.) What a tranſporting pleaſure is it, to behold great bleſſings and advantages to us wrought

wrought by Providence, out of those very things that seemed to threaten our ruine or misery? and yet by due observing the ways of Providence, you may to your singular comfort find it so. Little did *Joseph* think his transportation into *Egypt*, had been in order to his advancement there; yet he lived with joy to see it, and with a thankful heart to acknowledge it, *Gen.* 45. 5. Wait and observe, and you shall assuredly find that Promise, *Rom.* 8. 28. working out its way through all Providences. How many times have you been made to say as *David*, Psal. 119. 71. *It is good for me that I have been afflicted.* O what a difference have we seen betwixt our afflictions at our first meeting with them, and our parting from them! We have entertained them with sighs and tears, but parted from them with joy, blessing God for them, as the happy Instruments of our good. Thus our fears and sorrows are turned into praises and songs of thanksgiving.

(4.) What unspeakable comfort is it for a poor soul, that sees nothing but sin and vileness in it self, at the same time to see what an high esteem and value the great God hath for him! This may be discerned by a due attendance to Providence, for there a man sees *goodness and mercy following* him through all his days, as it is *Psal.* 23. 6. Other men prosecute good, and it flies from them, they can never overtake it; but goodness and mercy follow the people of God, and they cannot avoid or escape it: it gives them chase day by day, and finds them out; even when they sometimes put themselves by sin out of the way of it. In all the Providences that befall them, goodness and mercy pursues them. O with

what a melting heart do they ſometimes reflect upon theſe things! *and will not the goodneſs of God be diſcouraged from following me, notwithſtanding all my vile affronts and abuſes of it in former mercies? Lord, what am I, that mercy ſhould thus purſue me, when vengeance and wrath purſue others as good by nature as I am?* It certainly argues the great eſteem God hath of a man, when he thus follows him with ſanctified Providences (whether they be comforts or croſſes) for his good. And ſo much is plain, from Job 7. 18. *Lord what is man, that thou ſhouldſt viſit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Certainly, Gods people are his treaſure, and by this it appears that they are ſo, that he withdraws not his eye from them, *Job* 36. 7. I ſay not, that Gods favour and reſpect to a man, may be concluded ſingly from his Providences; but ſanctified Providences may very much clear it to us: and when it doth ſo, it cannot but be matter of exceeding great joy.

(5.) To conclude, what is there in all this world, that can give a ſoul ſuch joy and comfort, as to find himſelf by every thing ſet on and farthered in his way to Heaven! And yet this may be diſcerned, by an heedful attendance to the effects and iſſues of Providences.

How croſs ſoever the Winds and Tides of Providence at any time ſeem to us, yet nothing is more certain, than that they all conſpire to haſten ſanctified ſouls to God, and fit them for glory.

St. *Paul* knew, that both his bonds and the afflictions added to them ſhould turn to, or (as the word ἀποβήσεται imports) finally iſſue in his ſalva-

ſalvation, *Phil.* 1. 19. Not that in themſelves they ſerve to any ſuch purpoſe; but as they are over-ruled and determined to ſuch an end, *through Prayer, and the ſupply of the Spirit of Jeſus Chriſt.* When *Prayer* the external, and the *Spirit* the internal means are joyned with them; then Afflictions themſelves become excellent means to promote ſalvation. And have we not with joy obſerved, how thoſe very things, that ſenſe and reaſon tell us are oppoſite to our happineſs, have been the moſt bleſſed Inſtruments to promote it? How hath God bleſſed *Croſſes* to mortifie *corruption*, *wants* to kill our *wantonneſs*, *diſappointments* to wean us from the *world*! O we little think, how comfortable thoſe things will be in the review, which are ſo burdenſome to preſent ſenſe!

The Third Motive.

In the next place, I beſeech you conſider, *What an effectual means the due obſervation of Providence will be to over-power and ſuppreſs the natural Atheiſm that is in your hearts.*

There is a natural ſeed of Atheiſm in the beſt hearts, and this is very much nouriſhed, by paſſing a raſh and falſe judgement upon the works of Providence. When we ſee wicked ones to proſper in the world, and godly men cruſhed and deſtroyed in the way of righteouſneſs and integrity; it may tempt us to think, there is no advantage by religion, and all our ſelf-denyal and holineſs, to be little better than loſt labour. Thus ſtood the caſe with good *Aſaph*, Pſal. 73. 12, 13. *Behold, theſe are the ungodly that proſper in the world, they increaſe in riches*: and what doth the fleſh

infer from thence? Why no leſs than the unprofitableneſs of the ways of holineſs, *Verily I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in innocency.* This irreligious Inference carnal reaſon was ready to draw from the diſpenſations of outward proſperity to wicked men; but now if we would heedfully obſerve, either the ſignal retributions of Providence to *many* of them in *this world*, or to *all* of them in the *world to come*; O what a full confirmation is this to our faith? Pſal. 9 16. *The Lord is known by the Judgments that he executeth.* The fifty eighth *Pſalm* contains the Characters of the moſt prodigious ſinners, whoſe wickedneſs is aggravated,

By the deliberation with which it's committed, *V.* 2.

By their habit and cuſtom in it, *V.* 3.

By their incorrigibleneſs and perſiſtence in it, *V.* 4, 5.

And the Providence of God is there invited To deſtroy their power, *V.* 6. and that either By a gradual and inſenſible conſumption of them, *V.* 7, 8. or,

By a ſuddain and unexpected ſtroke, *V.* 9.

And what ſhall the effects of ſuch Providences be to the Righteous? Why, it ſhall be matter of joy, *V.* 10. And great confirmation to their faith in God, V. 11. *Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.*

And on the contrary, how convincingly clear are thoſe Providences, that demonſtrate the Being, Wiſdom, Power, Love and Faithfulneſs of God, in the ſupporting, preſerving and delivering of the Righteous, in all their dangers, fears and difficulties? In theſe things the Lord ſhews him-

himself, to his people, *Psal* 94. 1. Yea, he shews himself to spiritual eyes in the Providences, as clearly, as the Sun manifests himself by his own beams of light, Hab. 3. 3, 4. *His brightness was as the light, and he had horns coming out of his hands, and there was the hiding of his power.* It's spoken of the Lords going forth for his people in their deliverance from their Enemies: and then he had horns or raies and beams of power and mercy coming out of his hands; by his hands, are meant his Providential administrations and dispensations, and the horns that came out of them, are nothing else but the glorious display of his Attributes in those Providences. How did God make himself known to his people in that signal deliverance of them out of *Egypt*? See *Exod.* 6. 3. then he was known to them by his name *Jehovah*, in giving being by his Providences to the mercies promised.

Thus when *Christ* shall give his people the last and greatest deliverance from *Antichrist*, he shall shew himself to his people in a vesture dipt in blood, and his Name shall be called, *The Word of God*, Rev. 19. 13. His Name was the Word of God before; but then he was the Word *revealing* and discovering the promises and truths of God; now *accomplishing* and fulfilling them. That his Name is near, his wonderful works declare, *Psal.* 75. 1.

But more particularly, let us bring it home to our own experience. It may be, we find our selves sometimes assaulted with Atheistical thoughts: we are tempted to think God hath left all things below to the course and sway of nature, that our prayers reach him not, as it is *Lam.*

3.44. that he regards not what evils befall us. But, tell me Saints, have you not enough at hand to ſtop the mouths of all ſuch temptations? O do but reflect upon your own Experiences, and ſolemnly ask your own hearts.

(1.) Have you never ſeen the All-ſufficient God in the proviſions he hath made for you and yours, throughout all the way that you have gone! Who was it that ſupplyed to you whatever was needful in all your ſtraits? Was it not the Lord? *'Tis he that hath given bread to them that fear him, and hath been ever mindful of his Covenant*, Pſal. 111. 5. O do but conſider the conſtancy, ſeaſonableneſs, and at ſometimes the extraordinarineſs of theſe proviſions, and how they have been given in upon prayer, and ſhut your eyes if you can, againſt the convincing evidence of that great truth, Job 36.7. *He withdraweth not his eye from the Righteous.*

(2.) Have you not plainly diſcerned the care of God in your preſervations from ſo many and great dangers as you have eſcaped and been carried through hitherto? How is it, that you have over-lived ſo many mortal dangers, ſickneſſes, accidents, deſigns of Enemies to ruine you? It is I preſume, beyond queſtion with you, that the very finger of God hath been in theſe things, and that it is by his care alone, you have been preſerved. When God had ſo ſignally delivered *David* from a dangerous diſeaſe and the plots of Enemies againſt him, *by this* (ſaith he) *I know thou favoureſt me, becauſe mine enemy doth not triumph over me*, Pſal. 41.11. he gathered from thoſe gracious protections, the care God had over him.

(3.)

(3.) Have you not plainly discerned the hand of God, in the returns and accomplishments of your prayers? Nothing can be more evident than this, to men of observation, Psal. 34. 4, 5, 6. *I sought the Lord, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. They looked unto him and were lightned, and their faces were not ashamed. This poor man cryed, and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.* Parallel to this, runs the experience of thousands and ten thousands of Christians this day; they know they have the petitions they asked of him. The *Mercy* carries the very impress and stamp of the *Duty* upon it. So that we can say, This is the *Mercy*, the very Mercy I have so often *sought* God about. O how satisfying, and convincing are these things!

(4.) Have you not evidently discerned the Lords hand, in the guiding and directing of your paths, to your unforeseen advantage? Things that you never projected for your selves, have been brought about beyond all your thoughts. Many such things are with God; and which of all the Saints hath not found that word *Jer.* 10. 23. verified by clear and undeniable experience? *The way of man is not in himself.* I presume, if you will but look over the mercies you possess this day, you will find three to one, it may be ten to one thus wrought by the Lord for you. And how satisfying beyond all Arguments in the world are these experiences, That there is a God to whom his people are exceeding dear, *a God that performeth all things for them*!

(5.) Is it not fully convictive, that there is a God who takes care of you, in as much as you have

have found in all the temptations and difficulti of your lives his promiſes ſtill fulfilled, and fait fully performed in all thoſe conditions? I appe to your ſelves, if you have not ſeen that Prom made good; Pſal. 91. 15. *I will be with him trouble*; and that 1 Cor. 10. 13. *God is faithf who will not ſuffer you to be tempted above that y are able; but will with the temptation alſo make a w to eſcape, that ye may be able to bear it.* Have m theſe been as clearly made out by Providence b fore your eyes, as the Sun at Noon day? Wh room then is left for Atheiſtical ſuggeſtions i your breaſts?

The Fourth Motive.

The Recording and Recognizing of the perfo mances of Providence, will be a ſingular ſup port to faith in future exigencies. This excellen uſe of it lyes full in the very eye of the Te There never befell *David* in all his troubles, a greater ſtrait and diſtreſs than this; and doubt leſs his faith had ſtaggered, had not the conſide rations of former Providence come in to its re lief. From this *Topick* faith argues, and that v try ſtrongly and concluſively. So did *David's* faith in many exigencies: when he was to en counter the *Champion* of the *Philiſtins*, it was from former Providence that he encouraged himſelf, 1 *Sam.* 17. 37. And the Apoſtle *Paul* improve his experiences to the ſame purpoſe, 2 *Cor.* 1. 9, 10. Indeed the whole Scripture is full of it: What Chriſtians underſtands not the exceedin uſefulneſs of thoſe experiences he hath had t relieve and enliven? But I ſhall not ſatisfie my ſelf with the common aſſertion, than which no-

thing

Diligenter perpendamus res præteritas, tum præſentes; ut ad futura parati, & accinctti ſimus: fides argumentare ſolet à præterito, ad præſens; & ab utroque ad futurum. Alſted.

thing is more trite in the lips of professors: but will labour to shew you, wherein the great usefulness of our Recorded Experiences, for encouraging faith labouring under difficulties, consists. To this purpose, I shall desire the Reader to ponder seriously these following particulars.

1. How much advantage those things have upon our souls, which we have already felt and tasted, beyond those which were never relished by any former experience? What is Experience? but the bringing down of the objects of faith to the adjudication and test of spiritual sense? Now when any thing have been once tasted, felt and judged by former Experience, it is much more easily believed and received when it concurs again. It's much easier for faith to travel in a path that is well known to it, having formerly trod it, than to beat out a new one which it never trod, nor can see one step before it. Hence it is, though there be a difficulty in all the acts of faith, yet scarce in any like the first adventure it makes upon *Christ*; and the reason lies here, because in the *subsequent* acts it hath all its former experiences to aid and encourage it; but in the *first adventure* it hath none at all of its own, it takes a path which it never knew before.

To trust God without any tryal or experience, is a more noble act of faith; but to trust him after we have often tryed him, is known to be more easie. O'tis no small advantage to a soul in a new plunge and distress, to be able to say, This is not the first time I have been in these deeps, and yet emerged out of them! Hence it was, that *Christ* rub'd up his Disciples memories with what Providence had formerly wrought for them in a day

day of ſtraits, Matth. 16. 8, 9, 10, 11. *O ye of little faith, why reaſon ye among your ſelves, becauſe ye have brought no bread? do ye not yet underſtand neither remember?* q d. Were ye never under any ſtrait for bread before now? Is this the firſt difficulty that ever your faith combated with? No, no, you have felt ſtraits, and experienced the power and care of God in ſupplying them, before now? and therefore I cannot but call you men of *little faith*; for a very ordinary and ſmall meaſure of faith, aſſiſted with ſo much experience as you have had, would enable you to truſt God. There is as much difference betwixt believing before, and after experience, as there is betwixt ſwiming with bladders, and our firſt venture into the deep waters without them.

What a ſingular encouragement to Faith do former Experiences yield it, by anſwering all the pleas and objections of unbelief drawn from the *object* of faith? Now there be two things that unbelief ſtumbles at in *God*: One is his Power, the other his Willingneſs to help.

(1.) Unbelief objects the impoſſibility of relief in deep diſtreſſes, Pſal. 78. 19. *Can God furniſh a Table in the Wilderneſs? can he give bread alſo? can he provide fleſh for his people?* O vile and unworthy thoughts of God! proceeding from our meaſuring the immenſe and boundleſs power of God, by our own line and meaſure: becauſe we ſee not which way relief ſhould come, we conclude, none is to be expected. But all theſe reaſonings of Unbelief are vanquiſht by a ſerious reflection upon our own Experiences: God hath helped, therefore he can, Iſa. 59. 1. *His hand is not ſhortned*: (*i.e.*) he hath as much power and ability as formerly.

(2.)

(2.) Unbelief objects against the Will of God, and questions, whether he will now be gracious, though he hath formerly been so. But after so many experiences of his readiness to help, what room for doubting remains? Thus Paul reasoned from the experience of what he had done, to what he could do, 2 Cor. 1. 10. And so did *David*, 1 Sam. 17. 36. Indeed if a man had never experienced the goodness of God to him, it were not so heinous a sin to question his willingness to do him good; but what place is left after such frequent tryals?

2. It gives great encouragement to faith, as it answers the objections of unbelief drawn from the *subject*. Now these Objections are of two sorts also.

(1.) *Such as* are drawn from our great unworthiness. How (saith Unbelief) can so sinful and vile a creature expect, that ever God should do this or that for me? 'Tis true, we find he did great things for *Abraham*, *Isaac*, *Jacob*. *Moses*, *&c.* but these were men of eminent holiness, men that obeyed God, and denyed themselves for him, and lived more in a day to his glory, than ever I did all my days.

Well, but what signifies all this to a soul, that under all its sensible vileness and unworthiness hath tasted the goodness of God as well as they? As unworthy as I am, God hath been good to me notwithstanding: his mercy appeared first to me, when I was worse than I am now, both in *condition* and *disposition*; and therefore I will still expect the continuance of his goodness to me, though I deserve it not. *If when we were Enemies we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, how much*

more

more being reconciled, we ſhall be ſaved by his life Rom. 5. 10.

(2.) Such as are drawn from the extremi of our preſent condition; if troubles or dange grow to an height, and we ſee nothing b ruine and miſery in the eye of reaſon before u now unbelief becomes importune and troubl ſome to the ſoul; now where are thy praye thy hopes, yea, where is now thy God?

But all this is eaſily put by and avoided, b conſulting our experiences in former caſes. T is not the firſt time I have been in theſe ſtra nor the firſt time I have had the ſame doubts a deſpondencies? and yet, God hath carried m through all, *Pſal.* 77. 7, 8, 9, *&c.* This is it th ſuffers not a Chriſtian to unravel all his hopes i an hour of temptation. O how uſeful are thes things to the people of God!

The Fifth Motive.

The Recognition of former Providences will miniſter to your ſouls continual matter of praiſe and thanksgiving, which is the very imployment of the Angels in Heaven, and the ſweeteſt part of our lives on Earth.

See *Pſal.* 61. 7, 8. If God will prepare Mercy and Truth for *David*, he will prepare Praiſes for his God, and that daily. So Pſal. 71. 6. *By thee have I been holden up from the womb, thou art he that took me out of my Mothers bowels*; (there Mercies from the beginning are recognized.) *My praiſe ſhall be continually of thee*: there the natura reſult of thoſe recognitions is expreſſed.

There be five things belonging to the praiſe o God, and all of them have relation to his Provi dences exerciſed about us. (1.

(1.) A careful Observation of the Mercies e receive from him, *Isa.* 41. 17, 18, 19, 20. his is fundamental to all praise: God cannot glorified for the mercies we never noted.

(2.) A faithful Remembrance of the favours ceived, Psal. 103. 2. *Bless the Lord, O my soul, d forget not all his benefits.* Hence the Lord ands the Ingratitude of his people, Psal. 106. 13. *ey soon forgat his works.*

(3.) A due Appreciation and Valuation of ery Providence that doth us good, 1 *Sam.* 12.24. at Providence that fed them in the Wilderness th Manna, was the most remarkable Providence them? but they not valuing it at its worth, d had not that praise for it which he ex-cted, *Numb.* 11. 6.

(4.) The Excitation of all the faculties and owers of the soul in the acknowledgement of ese mercies to us. Thus *David*, Psal. 103. 1. *Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me ess his holy name.* Soul-praise is the very soul praise: this is the fat and marrow of that hank-offering.

(5.) A suitable Retribution for the mercies received. This *David* was careful about, *Psal.* 116. 1. And the Lord taxes good *Hezekiah* for he neglect of it, 2 *Chron.* 32. 24, 25. This consists in a full and hearty resignation of all to him: hat we have received by Providence from him: nd in our willingness actually to part with all for im, when he shall remand it.

Thus you see, how all the ingredients to praise, ave respect to Providences. But more particularly I will shew you, that as all the ingredients of raise have respect to Providences, so all the motives

tives and Arguments obliging and engaging soul to praise, are found therein also. To this end consider, how the mercy and goodness of God is exhibited by Providence, to excite our thankfulness.

(1.) That the goodness and mercy of God is let out upon his people in his Providences about them: and this is the very root of praise. It is not so much the possession that Providence gives us of such or such comforts, as the goodness and kindness of God in the dispensing of them, that engages a gracious soul to praise, Psal. 63. 3. *Because thy loving kindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee.* To give, maintain and preserve our life, are choice acts of Providences: but to do all this in a way of grace and loving-kindness, this is far better than the gifts themselves: life is but the shadow of death without it: this is the mercy that crowns all other mercies, *Psal.* 103. 4. It's this a sanctified soul desires God would manifest in every Providence about him, *Psal.* 17. 7. and what is our praising of God else, but our shewing forth that loving-kindness, which he sheweth us in his Providences? *Psal.* 92. 1, 2.

(2.) As the loving-kindness of God manifested in Providences, is a motive to praise; so the *free* and *undeserved* favours of God, dispensed by the hand of Providence, oblige the soul to praise. This was the consideration that melted *David*'s heart into a thankful praising frame, even the consideration of the free and undeserved favours cast in upon him by Providence, 2 Sam. 7. 18. *What am I? O Lord God: and what is my Fathers house, that thou hast brought me hi-*

therto

therto? (*i. e.*) raiſed me by Providence from a mean Condition to all this Dignity: *From following the Ewes, to feed Jacob his People*, Pſalm 78. 70, 71. O this is it that engages thankfulneſs, *Gen.* 32. 10.

(3.) As the freeneſs of Mercies diſpenſed by Providence, engageth Praiſe; ſo the *Multitudes* of Mercies heaped this way upon us, ſtrongly oblige the Soul to thankfulneſs. Thus *David* comes before the Lord encompaſſed with a Multitude of Mercies to Praiſe him, *Pſalm* 5. 7. We have our loads of Mercies, and that every Day, *Pſalm* 68. 19. O what a rich heap will the Mercies of one Day make, being laid together!

(4.) As the Multitudes of Mercies diſpenſed by Providence, oblige to Praiſe; ſo the *tenderneſs* of Gods Mercy manifeſted in his Providence, leaves the Soul under a ſtrong Obligation to thankfulneſs. We ſee what tender Reſentments the Lord hath of all our wants, ſtraits and burdens, *Pſalm* 103. 13. *Like as a Father pitieth his Children, ſo the Lord pitieth them that fear him.* He is full of Bowels, as that Word πολύσπλαγχνος in *James* 5. 11. ſignifies. Yea, there are not only Bowels of Compaſſion in our God, but the tenderneſs of Bowels, like thoſe of a Mother to her Sucking Child, *Iſa.* 49. 15. He feels all our Pains as if the apple of his Eye were touched, *Zech.* 2. 8. and all this is diſcovered to his People in the way of his Providences with them, *Pſalm* 111. 1, 2, 3, 4. O who of all the Children of God hath not often found this in his Providences? And who can ſee it, and not be filled with thankfulneſs: All theſe are ſo many Bands clapt by Providence upon the Soul, to oblige it to a Life of Praiſe. Hence it is, that the Prayers of the Saints are ſo full of thankſ-

givings upon these accounts. 'Tis sweet to recount them to the Lord in Prayer: To lye at his Feet in an holy Astonishment at his gracious Condescensions to poor Worms.

The Sixth Motive.

The due Observation of Providence will endear Jesus Christ every Day more and more to your Souls. *Christ* is the Channel of Grace and Mercy; through him are all the *decursus & recursus gratiarum*, all the Streams of Mercy that flow from God to us, and all the returns of Praise from us to God, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22. All Things are ours upon no other Title, but our being his.

Now there be six Things in Providence, that are exceedingly endearing of the *Lord Jesus Christ* to his People: And these are the most sweet and delicious Parts of all our Enjoyments.

1. The purchase of all those Mercies which Providences convey to us, is by his own Blood: For not only Spiritual and Eternal Mercies, but even all our Temporal ones, are the Acquisition of his Blood. Look, as Sin forfeited all, so *Christ* restored all these Mercies again to us by his Death. Sin had so shut up the womb of Mercy, that had not *Christ* made an Atonement by his Death, it could never have brought forth one Mercy to all Eternity for us. It is *with him* that God *freely gives us all things*, Rom. 8. 32. Heaven it self, and all things needful to bring us thither, among which, is principally included the Tutelage and Aid of Divine Providence: So that whatever good we receive from the Hand of Providence, we must put it upon the score of Christs Blood; and when we receive it, we may say, 'Tis the price of Blood: 'Tis a Mercy rising up out of the Death of Christ;

Bona gratiæ & gloriæ, ac præ omnibus divinæ tutelæ opis, ac providentiæ suæ scutum. Poli Synopsis in loc.

Christ: It cost him dear, though it come to me freely: It's *sweet* in the *Possession*, but costly in the *Acquisition*. Now this is a most endearing Consideration: Did *Christ* dye, that these Mercies might Live? Did he pay his invaluable Blood to purchase these Comforts, that I possess? O what transcendent, matchless Love, was the Love of Christ! You have known Parents that have laid out all their Stock of Money to Purchase Estates for their Children; but when did you hear of any that spent the whole Stock and Treasure of their Blood, to make a Purchase for them? If the Life of Christ had not been so afflictive and sad to him, ours could not have been so sweet and comfortable to us: 'Tis through his Poverty we are enriched, 2 *Cor.* 8. 9. These sweet Mercies that are born of Providence every Day, are the Fruits of *the Travel of his Soul.*

2. The Sanctification of all, is by our Union with Christ: 'Tis by vertue of our Union with his Person, that we enjoy the sanctified Gifts and Blessings of Providence. All these are Mercies additional to that great Mercy *CHRIST*, *Mat.* 6. 33. They are given with him, as in *Rom.* 8. 32. This is the Tenure by which we hold them, 1 *Cor.* 3. 21, 22, 23. Look, what we lost in *Adam*, is restored again with Advantage in *Christ*: Immediately upon the fall, that Curse, *Gen.* 2. 17. seized upon all the miserable Posterity of *Adam*, and upon all their Comforts, *outward* as well as *inward*; and this still lyes heavy upon them: All that Providence doth for them that are Christless, is but to feed so many poor condemned Wretches, till the sentence they are under, be executed upon them: It is indeed bountiful and open-handed to many of them; and fills them with Earthly Comforts;

but not one ſpecial ſanctified Mercy is to be found among all their Enjoyments: Theſe Gifts of Providence do but deceive, defile and deſtroy them through their own Corruptions, and for want of Union with Chriſt, *Prov.* 1. 32. *The Proſperity of Fools ſhall deſtroy them.*

But when a Man is once in Chriſt, then all Providences are ſanctified and ſweet, *Tit.* 1. 15. *Unto the pure, all things are pure. A little that a Righteous Man hath, is better than the Treaſures of many wicked*, Pſalm 37. 16. Now Chriſt becomes an Head of *Influence*, as well as of *Dominion*; and in all things he conſults the good of his own Members, *Eph.* 1. 22.

3. The Diſpenſation of all our Comforts and Mercies, is by his Direction and Appointment. It's true, the *Angels* are employed in the Kingdom of Providence, they move the wheels, (*i. e.*) are inſtrumental in all the Revolutions in this lower World; but ſtill they receive Directions and Orders from Chriſt, as you may ſee in that admirable Scheme of Providences, *Ezek.* 1. 25, 26, &c. Now what an endearing Meditation is this! Whatever Creature be inſtrumental for any good to you, it's your Lord Jeſus Chriſt that gave the orders and commands to that Creature to do it; and without it they could have done nothing for you: It's your Head in Heaven that conſults your Peace and Comfort on Earth: Theſe be the Fruits of his Care for you. So in the Prevention and Reſtraints of Evil; 'tis he that Bridles in the Wrath of Devils and Men he holds the Reins in his own Hands, *Rev.* 2. 10. 'Twas the care of Chriſt over his poor Sheep at *Damaſcus*, that ſtopt the raging Adverſary who was upon the Way, deſigning to deſtroy them, *Acts* 9.

4. The

4. The *Continuation* of all your Mercies and Comforts, outward as well as inward, is the fruit of his Intercession in Heaven for you. For look, as the offering up of the Lamb of God a Sacrifice for Sin, opened the Door of Mercy at first; so his appearing before God as a Lamb that had been slain, still keeps that door of Mercy open, *Rev.* 5. 6. *Heb.* 9. 24. By this his Intercession, our Peace and Comforts are prolonged to us, *Zech.* 1. 12, 13. Every Sin we commit, would put an end to the Mercies we possess, were it not for that Caution which is put in for us by it, 1 *John* 2. 1, 2. *If any Man Sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous: And he is the Propitiation for our Sins*, &c. This stops all Pleas, and procures new Pardons for new Sins. Hence it is *he saves to the uttermost*, to the last compleating Act, *Heb.* 7. 25. New Sins do not irritate our former Pardons, nor cut off our Priviledges setled upon us in Christ.

5. The returns and answers of all your Prayers and Cries to Heaven for the removing of your Afflictions, or supply of your wants, are all procured and obtained for you by Jesus Christ. He is the Master of your Requests; and were it not that God had respect to him, he would never regard your cries to him, nor return any answer of Peace to you, how great soever your Distresses should be, *Rev.* 8. 3, 4. 'Tis his Name that gives our Prayers their acceptance, *John* 15. 16. Because the Father can deny him nothing, therefore your Prayers are not denyed. Doth God condescend to hear you in the Day of trouble? Doth he convince you by your own Experience, that your Prayers have *Power with God, and do prevail?* O see how much you owe to your dear Lord Jesus

Christ, for this high and glorious Priviledge!

6. The Covenant of Grace, in which all your comfortable Enjoyments are comprized, and by which they are secured, sanctified, and sweetned to you, is made in Christ, and ratified by him betwixt God and you. Your Mercies are all comprized in this Covenant, even your daily Bread, *Psalm* 111. 5. as well as your Justification, and other spiritual Mercies.

'Tis your Covenant Interest, that secures to you what ever it comprizes, *Isa.* 55. 3. Hence they are called the sure Mercies of *David*.

Nay, this is it that sanctifies them, and gives them the nature of special and peculiar Mercies. One such Mercy is worth a thousand common Mercies. And being sanctified and special Mercies, they must needs be exceeding sweet beyond all other Mercies. On these accounts it was, that *David* so rejoiced in his Covenant Interest, though laden with many Afflictions, 2 *Sam.* 23. 5.

But now all this hangs entirely upon Christ. The *New Testament* is in his Blood, 1 *Cor.* 11. 25. And whatever Mercies you reap from that Covenant, you must thank the Lord Jesus Christ for them. Put all this together, and then think how such Considerations will endear Christ to your Souls!

The Seventh Motive.

The due Observations of Providence have a marvellous Efficacy to melt the Heart, and make it thaw and relent ingenuously before the Lord.

How can a sanctified Heart do less, than melt into Tears, whilst it either *considers* the dealings of God from Time to Time with it: Or *compares* the Mer-

Mercies received, with the Sins committed; or the *different* Administrations of Providence towards it *self* and *others!*

Let a Man but set himself to think deliberately and closely of the ways of Providence towards him, let him but follow the Tract of Providence, as it hath led him all along the way that he hath gone, and if there be any Principle of gracious tenderness in him, he shall meet with variety of occasions to excite and draw it forth. Reader, go back with thy serious Thoughts (1.) To the beginning of the Ways of God with thee, the Mercies that brake out early in thy Youth, even the first born Mercies from the womb of Providence; and thou wilt say, What need I go farther? Here is enough, not only to move, but overwhelm my Heart. *May I not from this time cry unto thee, my Father, thou art the guide of my Youth*, Jer. 3. 4. What a critical Time is the Time of Youth? It's the moulding Age; and (ordinarily) according to the course of those leading Providences, after-Providences do steer their Course. What levity, rashness, ignorance and strong propensions to Sin and Ruine accompanied that Age? How many being then left to the sway of their own Lusts, run themselves into those Sins and Miseries, which they never recover themselves from to their dying Day? These, like the Errors of the first Concoction, are rarely rectified afterwards. Did the Lord guide thee by his Providence, when but a Child? Did he then preserve thee from those Follies and Miscarriages, which blast the very Blossom, and nip the Bud, so that no good Fruit is to be expected afterwards? Did he then cast thee into such Families, or among such company and acquaintance, as moulded and

formed thy Spirit to a better Temper? Did he then direct thee into that way of Employment, wherein thou haſt ſeen ſo large a train of happy Conſequents ever ſince following thee? And wilt thou not from henceforth ſay, *My Father, my Father, thou art the guide of my Youth?*

Or (2.) Let us but bring our thoughts cloſe to the Providences of after-Times, and conſider how the ſeveral changes and removes of our Lives have been ordered for us: Things we never foreſaw nor deſigned (but much better for us, than what we did deſign) have been all along ordered for us. *The way of Man is not in himſelf. Gods Thoughts have not been our Thoughts, nor his Ways our Ways.* Among the eminent Mercies of thy Life, Reader, how many of them have been meer *ſurprizals* to thee? Thy own Projects have been thruſt aſide, to make way for better Things deſigned by Providence for thee.

Nay, (3.) Do but obſerve the *Springs* and *Autumns* of Providence, in what order they have *flouriſhed* and *faded* with thee, and thou wilt find thy ſelf over-powered with the Senſe of Divine Wiſdom and Goodneſs: When neceſſity required, ſuch a Friend was ſtirred up to help thee, ſuch a Place opened to receive thee, ſuch a Relation raiſed up or continued to refreſh thee: And no ſooner doth Providence deprive thee of any of them, but either thy need of them ceaſes, or ſome other way is opened to thee. O the depth of Gods Wiſdom and Goodneſs! O the matchleſs tenderneſs of God to his People!

(4.) Compare the dealings of Providence with you and others, yea, with others that ſprang up with you in the ſame Generation, it may be, in the ſame Families, and from the ſame Parents, it may

may be in Families greater and more flouriſhing in the World than yours, and ſee the difference, upon many great accounts, it hath made betwixt you and them. I knew a *Chriſtian*, who after many Years Separation, was viſited by his own Brother, the very ſight of whom, wrought upon him, much as the ſight of *Benjamin* did upon *Joſeph*, ſo that he could not refrain to fall upon his Neck, and weep for Joy; but after a few hours ſpent together, finding the Spirit of his Brother, not only eſtranged from all that's ſpiritual and ſerious, but alſo very vain and prophane, he haſtened to his Chamber, ſhut the door upon him, threw himſelf down at the Feet of God, and with flowing Eyes, and a melting Heart, admired the diſtinguiſhing Grace of God, ſaying, Was not *Eſau Jacob*'s Brother? O Grace, Grace, aſtoniſhing Grace!

(5.) Compare the carriage of Providence to-towards you, with your own carriage towards the Lord; and it muſt needs melt your Hearts to find ſo much Mercy beſtowed, where ſo much Sin hath been committed. What Place did you ever live in, where you cannot remember great Provocations committed, and manifold Mercies notwithſtanding that, received? O with how many *notwithſtandings* and *nevertheleſſes*, hath the Lord done you good in every Place! What Relation hath not been abuſed by Sin; and yet both raiſed up and continued by Providence for your Comfort? In every Place God hath left the Marks of his Goodneſs, and you the remembrances of your ſinfulneſs: Give your ſelves but leave to think of theſe things, and it's ſtrange if your Hearts relent not at the remembrance of them.

(6.) Or Laſtly, Do but compare your Dangers

gers with your Fears, and both with the ſtrange out-letts and doors of eſcape Providence hath opened, and it cannot do leſs than over-power you with a full Senſe of Divine Care and Goodneſs.

There have been dark Clouds ſeen to riſe over you, Judgment even at your door, ſometimes threatning your Life, ſometimes your Liberty, ſometimes your Eſtates, and ſometimes your dearest Relations, in whom it may be, your Life was bound up; remember in that Day, what faintneſs of Spirit ſeized you, what charges of guilt ſtirring up fears of the iſſue within you: You turned to the Lord in that Diſtreſs, and hath he not made a way to eſcape, and delivered you from all your Fears? *Pſalm* 34. 4.

Oh is your Life ſuch a continued Throng, ſuch a diſtracted Hurry, that there is no room to be found with Chriſtians to ſit alone, and think on theſe things, and preſs theſe marvellous diſcoveries of God in his Providences upon their own Hearts? Surely, might theſe Things but lye upon our Hearts, talk with our Thoughts by Day, and lodge with us at Night; they would even force their Paſſage down to our very Reins.

The Eighth Motive.

Due Obſervation of Providence will both beget and ſecure inward tranquillity in your Minds amidſt the Viciſſitudes and Revolutions of Things in this unſtable vain World.

Pſalm 4. 8. *I will both lay me down in Peace, and ſleep, for the Lord only maketh me dwell in ſafety.* He reſolves the ſinful Fears of Events ſhall not rob him of his inward quiet, nor torture his Thoughts with anxious preſages; He will commit all his con-

concerns into that faithful fatherly Hand that had hitherto wrought all Things for him, and he means not to lose the Comfort of one Nights rest, nor bring the evil of to Morrow upon the Day, but knowing in whose Hand he was, wisely enjoies the sweet Felicity of a resigned Will.

Now this Tranquillity of our Minds is as much begotten and preserved by a due Consideration of Providence, as by any thing whatsoever. Hence it was, that our *Lord Jesus Christ*, when he would cure the *Disciples* anxious and distracting sollicitudes about a livelihood, bids them consider the Care Providence hath over the Birds of the air, and the Lillies of the Field, how it feeds the one, and clothes the other without any anxious Care of theirs; and would have them well consider those Providences, and Reason themseles into a calm and sweet Composure of Spirit from those Considerations, *Mat.*6.27,28,29,30,31.

Two Things destroy the Peace and Tranquillity of our Lives, our *bewailing past disappointments*, or *fearing future ones*. But would we once learn prevision and provision to be Divine Prerogatives, and take notice how often Providence baffles those that pretend to it, causing the good they foresaw (according to their Conjectures) coming to their Hand, yet to balk them and flee from them: And the evil they thought themselves sufficiently secured from, to invade them. I say, would we consider how Providence daily baffles these Pretensions of Men, and asserts its own Dominion, it would greatly conduce to the Tranquillity of our Lives.

This is a great Truth, that there is no Face of Adversity so formidable, but being viewed from this station, would become amicable. Now there be

be ſeveral Things in the Conſideration of Providence, that naturally and kindly compoſe the mind of a Chriſtian to Peace, and bring it to a ſweet reſt, whilſt events hang in a doubtful ſuſpenſe.

1. As Firſt, The Supremacy of Providence, and its uncontroulable Power in working. This is often ſeen in the good that it brings us in a way that's above the Thoughts and Cares of our Minds, or Labour of our Hands. *I had not thought* (ſaid *Jacob*) *to have ſeen thy Face; and lo, God hath ſhewed me thy Seed alſo*, Gen. 48. 11. There is a frequent coincidency of Providences in a way of ſurprizal, which from no appearance, or the remoteſt tendency of outward Cauſes could be foreſeen, but rather falls viſibly Croſs to the preſent *Scheme*, and poſture of our Affairs. Nothing tends to convince us of the Vanity and Folly of our own Sollicitudes and Projections, more than this doth.

2. The profound Wiſdom of Providence in all that it *performeth* for the People of God. The Wheels are full of Eyes, *Ezek.* 1. 18 (*i. e.*) there is an intelligent and wiſe Spirit that ſits upon, and governs the Affairs of this World.

Non cæco impetu volvuntur rotæ.

This Wiſdom ſhines out to us in the unexpected, yea, contrary events of Things. How often have we been courting ſome beautiful appearance that invited our Senſes, and with trembling ſhun'd the formidable Face of other Things, when notwithſtanding the Iſſues of Providence have convinced us, that our Danger lay in what we courted, and our good in what we ſo ſtudiouſly declined? This alſo is a ſweet Principle of Peace and quiet to the Chriſtians mind, that he knows not, but his good may be imported in what ſeem-

ſeemed to threaten his Ruine. Many were the Diſtreſſes and Straits of *Iſrael* in the Wilderneſs, but all was *to humble them, that he might do them good in the latter End*, Deut. 8. 16. Sad and diſmal was the Face of that Providence that ſent them out of their own Land, into the Land of the *Chaldeans*; yet even this was a project to do them good, *Jer.* 24 5. How often have we retracted our raſh and headlong cenſures of Things upon Experience of this Truth! And been taught to bleſs our Afflictions and Diſappointments in the Name of the Lord. Many a Time have we kiſſed thoſe Troubles at parting, which we met with trembling. And what can promote Peace under doubtful Providences more Effectually than this?

3. The Experiences we have had throughout our Lives of the faithfulneſs and conſtancy of Providence, are of excellent uſe to allay and quiet our Hearts in any Trouble that befals us. *Hitherto God hath helped*, 1 Sam. 7. 12. We never found him wanting to us in any Caſe hitherto: This is not the firſt ſtrait we have been in: The firſt time that our Hearts and Hopes have been low. Surely, he is the ſame God now as heretofore, his hand is not ſhortned, neither doth his faithfulneſs fail. O recount in how great Extremities former Experience hath taught you not to deſpair!

4. The Conjectures Chriſtians may make of the Way of Providence towards them, from what its former Methods have been towards them, is exceeding quieting and comfortable. It's uſual with Chriſtians, to compare Times with Times, and to gueſs at the Iſſue of one Providence by another. The Saints do know what courſe Providence uſually holds, and accordingly with great proba-

probability Collect what they may expect from what in like Caſes they have formerly obſerved. Chriſtian, examine thine own Heart, and its former Obſervations, and thou wilt find, as *Pſal.* 89. 30, 31, 32. That it's uſually the Way of God to prepare ſome ſmart Rods to correct thee, when either thy Heart hath ſecretly revolted from God, and is grown vain, careleſs and ſenſual, or when thy ſteps have declined, and thou haſt turned aſide to the Commiſſion of Iniquity. And then when thoſe Rods have been ſanctified to humble, reduce and purge thy Heart, it's uſually obſerved, that thoſe ſad Providences are then upon the change, and then the Lord changes the Voice of his Providence towards thee, *Jer.* 3. 12, 13. *Go, and proclaim theſe Words towards the North, and ſay, Return thou backſliding Iſrael, ſaith the Lord, and I will not cauſe mine anger to fall upon you, for I am merciful, ſaith the Lord, and I will not keep Anger for ever. Only acknowledge thine Iniquity,* &c.

If therefore I find the bleſſed Effects of the Rod upon me, that it hath done its Work, to break the hard Heart, and pull down the proud Heart, and awaken the drowſie Heart, and quicken the ſlothful, negligent, lazy Heart; now with great probability I may Conjecture, a more comfortable aſpect of Providence will quickly appear, the refreſhing and reviving Time is nigh.

5. It is uſual with Chriſtians, to argue themſelves into freſh reviving Hopes, when the ſtate of things is moſt forlorn, by comparing the Providences of God one with another.

(1.) It is a mighty compoſing Meditation, when we compare the Providences of God towards the inanimate and irrational Creatures, with

with his Providences towards us. Doth he take care for the very Fowls of the Air, for whom no Man provides, as well as those at the door which we daily feed? Doth he so clothe the very Grass of the Field? Hear the young Ravens, when they cry for Meat? And can it be supposed, he should forget his own People, that are of much more value than these?

(2.) Or if we compare the Bounty and Care that Providence hath expressed to the Enemies of God, how it feeds and clothes and protects them, even whilst they are fighting against him with his own Mercies; it cannot but quiet and satisfie us, that surely he will not be wanting to that People upon whom he hath set his Love, to whom he hath given his Son, and for whom he hath designed Heaven it self.

(3.) Or Lastly, It must needs quiet us, when we consider, what the Lord did for us in the way of his Providence, when we our selves were in the state of Nature, and Enmity against God. Did he not then look after us, when we knew him not? Provided for us, when we owned him not in any of his Mercies? Bestowed thousands of Mercies upon us, when we had no title to Christ or any one Promise? And will he now do less for us, since we are reconciled and become his Children?

Surely, such Considerations as these, cannot but fill the Soul with Peace, and preserve the Tranquillity of it under the most distracting Providences.

The Ninth Motive.

Due Observations of the Ways of God in his Providences towards us, have an excellent usefulness

neſs and aptitude to advance and improve Holineſs in our Hearts and Lives. For,

1. The Holineſs of God is manifeſted to us in all his Works of Providence, *Pſalm* 145.17. *The Lord is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his Works.* The Inſtruments uſed by Providence may be very ſinful and wicked, they may aim at baſe ends, and make uſe of wicked mediums to attain them; but it's certain Gods deſigns are moſt pure, and all his workings are ſo too. Though he permits, limits, orders and over-rules many unholy Perſons and Actions; yet in all he Works like himſelf; and his Holineſs is no more defiled and ſtained by their Impurity, than the Sun-beams are by the noiſome Exhalations of a Dunghil, *Deut.* 32. 4. *He is the Rock, his Work is perfect; for all his Ways are Judgment, a God of Truth, and without Iniquity: Juſt and Right is he.* So that in all his Providences he ſets before us a perfect Pattern of Holineſs, that we might be Holy in all our Ways, as our Father is in all his Ways. But this is not all.

2. His Providences if duely obſerved, promote Holineſs, by ſtopping up our Way to Sin. Oh if Men would but note the Deſigns of God in his preventive Providences, how uſeful would it be to keep them Upright and Holy in their Ways? For why is it, that the Lord ſo often hedges up our way with Thorns, as it is *Hoſea* 2. 6. But that we ſhould not find our paths to Sin? Why doth he clogg us, but to prevent our ſtraying from him? 2 *Cor.* 12. 7. *Leſt I ſhould be exalted above meaſure, there was given me a Thorn in the Fleſh, a Meſſenger of Satan to buffet me.* O 'tis good to attend to theſe Works of God, and ſtudy the meaning of them. Sometimes Providence croſſeth a hopeful thriving project to advance our Eſtate, and fruſtrates

strates all our labours and cares; Why is this? but to hide pride from man. Shouldst thou prosper in the world, that prosperity might be thy snare, and make thee a proud, sensual, vain soul; the Lord Jesus sees this, and therefore withdraws the food and fuel from thy corruptions.

It may be thou hast a crazy, diseased, weak body; thou labourest under often infirmities: in this, the Wisdom and Care of God over thy soul is manifested; for wert thou not so clogged, how probable is it, that much more guilt might be contracted? Your poverty doth but clog your pride; reproaches clog your ambition: want prevents wantonness: sickness of body conduces to the prevention of many inward gripes of conscience and groans under guilt.

3. The Providences of God may be observed to conduce to our holiness, not only preventing sin, that we may not fall into it; but also purging our sins when we are fallen into them, Isa. 27 9. *By this therefore shall the iniquity of Jacob be purged; and this is all the fruit to take away his sin.* So *Dan.* 11, 33, 34, 35. they are of the same use that fire and water are for purging and cleansing; not that they can purge us from sin in their own vertue and power, for if so, those that have most afflictions would have most grace also? but it is in the vertue of Christ's blood, and God's blessing upon afflictive Providences, that they purge us from sin. A *Cross* without a *Christ* never did any man good. Now in God's afflictive Providences for sin there are many things that tend to the purging of it. For

(1.) Such rebukes of Providence discover the displeasure of God against us: the Lord frowns up-

God would not rub so hard, if it were not to fetch out the dirt that is ingrained in our natures: He loves Purity so well, he hadrather see a hole, than a *spot* in his *childs* garment. *Gurnals* Christian Armour, *Par.* 2. p. 221.

upon us in thoſe Providences. Our father is angry, and theſe are the tokens of it; and nothing works more to the melting of a gracious heart than this. Muſt not the heart of a Child melt and break whil'ſt the father is angry. O this is more bitter to our Spirits than all the ſmart and anguiſh of the affliction can be to our fleſh. See *Pſal.* 38. 1, 2, 3. *O Lord rebuke me not in thy wrath; neither chaſten me in thy hot diſpleaſure: for thine arrows ſtick faſt in me; and thine hand preſſeth me ſore. There is no ſoundneſs in my fleſh becauſe of thine anger: neither is there any reſt in my bones becauſe of my ſin.*

(2.) By theſe rebukes of ſin, the evil of ſin is diſcovered more ſenſibly to us, and we are made to ſee more clearly the evil of it in theſe glaſſes of affliction which Providence at ſuch times ſets before us, than formerly we ever ſaw. *Jer.* 2. 19. *Thine own wickedneſs ſhall correct thee; and thy backſlidings ſhall reprove thee, know therefore and ſee that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou haſt forſaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, ſaith the Lord of Hoſts.* O the Gall and Wormwood that we taſt in it under God's rebukes for it!

(3.) Providence blaſts and fruſtrates all ſinful projects to the people of God: whoever thrives in them, they ſhall not. *Iſa.* 30. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5. And this alſo convinces them of the folly that is in ſin, and makes them cleave to the way of ſimplicity and integrity.

4. Holineſs is promoted in the ſoul by cautioning and warning the ſoul againſt ſin for time to come. *Job.* 34. 31. *I have born chaſtiſement, I will not offend any more.* O happy Providences, how ſmart ſo-

ſoever, that make the ſoul for ever afraid of ſin! ſurely ſuch rods are well beſtow'd. This gives God his end: and if ever we ſorrowed after a godly ſort, in the day of our troubles it will work this careſulneſs. 2 *Cor.* 7. 11. *Behold this ſelf ſame thing that ye ſorrowed after a godly ſort, what careſulneſs it wrought in you?* &c. O if ever a man have been under a ſanctified rod which hath ſhewed him the evil of ſin, and kindly humbled him for it; and a temptation ſhould again ſollicite him to the ſame evil: Why thinks he, what a madneſs is it for me to buy repentance at ſo dear a rate? Have I not ſmarted enough already? You may as well ask me, whether I will run again into the fire, after I have been already ſcorcht in it?

5. To conclude, *Providences* do greatly improve and promote holineſs by drawing the Soul into the preſence of God, and giving it the opportunity and occaſion of much communion with him. Comfortable Providences will do this, they will melt a man's heart in love to the God of his mercies, and ſo pain his bowels that he ſhall not be quiet till he have found a place to pour out his Soul in thankfulneſs to the Lord. 2 *Sam.* 7. 18.

Affictive Providences will drive us to the feet of God, and there makes us to judge and condemn our ſelves. And all this hath an excellent uſe to deſtroy ſin, and promote holineſs in the Soul.

The Tenth Motive.

Laſtly, *The Conſideration and Study of Providence will be of ſingular uſe to us in a dying hour.* Hereby

we treasure up that which will singularly sweeten our death to us, and greatly assist our faith in the last encounter. You find when *Jacob* dyed, what reflections he had upon the dealing of God with him in the various Providences of his life. See *Gen.* 48. 3, 7, 15, 16. In like manner you find *Joshua* recording the Providences of God when at the brink of the grave: they were the subject of his dying discourse. *Josh.* 24. And I cannot but think it a sweet close to the life of any Christian: It must needs sweeten a death-bed to recount there the several remarkable passages of God's care and love to us from our beginning to that day: to reflect upon the mercies that went along with us all the way, when we are come to the end of it. O Christians, treasure up these instances for such a time as that is; that you may go out of the world blessing God for *all the goodness of truth* he hath performed to you all your life long. Now the meditations of these things must needs be of great use in that day, if you consider the following particulars.

1. The time of Death is the time when Souls are usually most violently assaulted by Satan with horrid temptations and black suggestions. We may say of that figurative, as it's said of the natural Serpent, *nunquam nisi moriens, producitur in longum*, He never exerts his utmost rage till the last encounter; and then his great design is to perswade the Saints, that God loves them not, hath no care nor regard for them, nor their cryes; though they pray for ease and cry for sparing mercy, they see none comes. He handles them with as much roughness and severity as other men; yea, many of the vilest and most dissolute wretches

wretches endure less torments, and are more gently handled than they. *Psal.* 73.4. *there are no bands in their death*, when as thou must go through a long lane of sickness to the grave, and endure many deaths in one.

But what credit can these plausible tales of Satan obtain with a Christian who hath been treasuring up all his life long the *memorials* of God's tender regard both to his wants and prayers, and that hath carefully remarked the evident returns of his prayers, and gracious condescensions of God to him from his beginning to that moment? In this case his faith is mightily assisted by thousands of experiences which back and encourage it, and will not suffer the soul to give up so easily a truth which he hath so often sensibly felt and tasted. I am sure (saith he) God hath had a tender fatherly care of me ever since I became his; he never failed me yet in any former strait; and I cannot believe he will do so now. I know his love is like himself, unchangeable. *Joh.* 13:1. *having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end: for this God is our God for ever and ever he will be our guide even unto death.* *Psal.* 48. 14. Did he love me in my youth, and will he cast me off in my decrepit age? *O God*, (saith the Psalmist) *thou hast taught me from my youth, and hitherto have I declared thy wondrous works, now also when I am old and gray headed, O God, forsake me not*, *Psal.* 71. 17, 18.

At death the Saints are engaged in the last, and one of the most eminent works of faith, even the committing themselves into the hands of God, when we are lanching forth into that vast Eterni-

ty, and entring into that new ſtate which will make ſo great a change upon us in a moment. In this Chriſt ſets us a pattern, *Luke.* 23. 46. *Father into thy hand I commend my ſpirit*; and having ſaid thus he gave up the Ghoſt. So *Stephen* at his death, *Lord Jeſus, receive my ſpirit, and immediately fell aſleep, Act.* 7. 59.

There be two ſignal and remarkable acts of faith, both exceedingly difficult, *viz.* its firſt act, and its laſt. The firſt is a great venture that it makes of it ſelf upon Chriſt: and the laſt is a great venture too, to caſt it ſelf into the Ocean of Eternity upon the credit of a Promiſe. But yet I know the firſt adventure of the Soul upon Chriſt is much more difficult than the laſt adventure upon death; and that which makes it ſo is in great meaſure, the manifold recorded experiences that the Soul hath been gathering up from the day of its eſpouſals to Chriſt unto its dying which is (in a ſenſe) its marriage day. Oh with what encouragement may a Soul throw himſelf into the arms of that God with whom he hath ſo long converſed and walked in this world! Whoſe viſits have been ſweet and frequent, with whom the ſoul hath contracted ſo intimate acquaintance in this world; whom he hath committed all its affairs to formerly, and ſtill found him a faithful God; and now hath no reaſon to doubt, but it ſhall find him ſo in this laſt diſtreſs and exigence alſo.

3. At death the people of God receive the laſt mercies that ever they ſhall receive in this world by the hand of Providence, and are immediately to make up their Accounts with God for all the mercies that ever they received from his hand.

What

What can be more ſuitable therefore to a dying perſon, than to recount with himſelf the mercies of his whole life, the manifold receipts of favour for which he is to reckon with God ſpeedily, and how ſhall this be done without a due and ſerious obſervation and recording of them now? I know there are thouſands of mercies forgotten by the beſt of Chriſtians: a memory of braſs cannot contain them: And I know alſo that Jeſus Chriſt muſt make up the Account for us, or it will never paſs with God; yet it is our duty to keep the Accounts of our own mercies, and how they have been improv'd by us, for we are Stewards, and then are to give an Account of our Stewardſhip.

4. At death we owe an Account alſo to men, and ſtand obliged (if there be opportunity for it) to make known to them that ſurvive us what we have ſeen and found of God in this world, that we may leave a teſtimony for God with men, and bring up a good report upon his ways. Thus dying *Jacob* when *Joſeph* was come to take his laſt farewell of him in this world, ſtrengthned himſelf and ſate upon the bed, and related to him the eminent appearances of God to him, and the places where, *Gen.* 48. 2, 3. as alſo an account of his afflictions, *Verſe* 7. So *Joſhua* in his laſt ſpeech to the people makes it his buſineſs to vindicate and clear the truth of the Promiſes, by recounting to them how the Providence of God had fulfill'd the ſame to a title in his day. *Joſh.* 23. 14. *And behold* (ſaith he) *this day I am going the way of all the earth, and ye know in all your hearts, and in all your Souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God ſpake concerning you; all are come to paſs unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof.* And

And certainly 'tis of great importance to the world, to understand the Judgements, and heart of the Experiences of dying men. They of all men are presumed to be most wise and most serious: Besides, this is the last opportunity that ever we shall have in this world to speak for God. O then what a sweet thing would it be to close up our lives with an honourable Account of the ways of God! to go out of the world blessing him for all the mercies and truth which he hath here performed to us! how would this encourage weak Christians, and convince the Atheistical world, that verily there is a reality and an excellency in the ways and people of God!

5. At death we begin the *Angelical life* of praise and thanksgiving. We then enter upon that everlasting sweet employment; and as I doubt not but the Providences in which we were concerned in this world will be a part of that Song which we shall sing in Heaven, so certainly it will become us to tune our hearts and tongues for it whil'st we are here, and especially when we are ready to enter upon that blessed state. O therefore let it be your daily meditation and study what God hath been to you, and done for you, from the beginning of his way hitherto.

And thus I have spread before you some encouragements to this blessed work. Oh that you would be perswaded to this lovely and every way beneficial practice. This I dare presume to say, that whoever finds a careful and a thankful heart to record and treasure up the daily experiences of God's mercy to him, shall never want new mercies to record to his dying day.

It was said of *Clandian* that he wanted matter suitable to the excellency of his parts; but where is the head or heart that is suitable to this matter? who can utter the mighty works of the Lord? who can shew forth all his praise? *Psal.* 106.2.

Thus I have through the aid of Providence dispatched the main design I aimed at in the choice of this subject. All that remains will now be speedily finished in some few Corollaries to be briefly noted upon the whole, and three or four practical Cases to be stated. You have heard how Providence *performeth all things for you* Learn thence,

First Corollary.

That God is therefore to be owned by you in all that befalls you in this world, whether it be in a way of success and comfort, or of trouble and affliction. O 'tis your duty to observe his hand and disposal: When God gives you comforts, 'tis your great evil not to observe his hand in them. Hence was that charge against *Israel*, *Hos.* 2. 8. *She did not know that I gave her Corn and Wine and Oil, and multiplied her Silver and Gold* (*i. e.*) she did not actually and affectionately consider my care over her and goodness to her, in these mercies. And so for afflictions, 'tis a great wickedness, when God's hand is lifted up not to see it. *Isa.* 26. 11. *The Ox knows his owner; and the Ass his masters crib, Isa.* 1. 3. the most dull and stupid creatures know their benefactors. O look to the hand of God in all; and know, that neither your comforts nor afflictions do arise out of the dust, or spring up out of the ground.

Second

Second Corollary.

If God perform all things for you, *how great is his condescension to and care over his people! What is man* (saith Job, chap. 7. v. 17, 18.) *that thou shouldst magnifie him, and set thine heart upon him? and that thou shouldst visit him every morning, and try him every moment?* Such is his tender care over you that he withdraws not his eye from you. See *Job* 36. 7. lest any hurt you, he himself will guard and keep you day and night. *Isa.* 27. 3. Should he withdraw his eye or hand one moment from you, that moment would be your ruine. Ten thousand evils watch but for such an opportunity, to rush in upon you, and destroy you and all your comforts. You are too dear to him to be trusted in any hand but his own. *Deut.* 33. 3. *All his Saints are in thy hand.*

Third Corollary.

Learn hence how you are obliged to perform all duties and services for God, who performeth all things for you. It was the wish of a good man, *optarem id me esse Deo, quod est mihi manus mea,* Oh that I could be to God what my hand is to me, *Viz.* a serviceable useful instrument. Shall God do all things for you, and will you do nothing for God? Is Providence every moment at work for you, and will you be idle? To what purpose then is all that God hath done for you? Is it not the aim and design of all, to make you a fruitful people? If God plant, and fence, and water you by Providence, sure he looks you should bring forth fruit. *Isa.* 5. 1, 2, 3, 4. O that in re-

return for all the benefits of Providence, you would say to God, as grateful *Elisha* said to the *Shunamite*, behold thou hast been careful for us with all this care, what is to be done for thee? *Kings* 4. 13. and with *David*, *Psal.* 116. 12. *what shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits towards me!* He is ever doing you good; be you always abounding in his work. His Providence stands by you in your greatest distresses and dangers; don't you flinch from God when his service and your duty is compassed about with difficulties. O be active for that God who is acting every moment for you.

Fourth Corollary.

Doth God perform all things for his people? Do not distrust him then as often as new or great difficulties arise. Why should you think he that hath done so many things for you, will now do no more? Surely, the Lords hand is not shortned that it cannot *save*, *nor his ear heavy that it cannot hear*; if any thing put a stop to his mercy, 'tis your iniquities, your distrust and infidelity. *Isa.* 59. 1. *How long will it be ere you believe him*? If a thousand and ten thousand of tryals and experiences of his tender care, faithfulness and love will cure this distemper in you, you have them at hand to do it. If the frequent confutations of this your distrust by the unexpected breakings out of mercy for you under like discouragements will cure it, look back and you may see them. Certainly you have been often forced by Providence with shame and repentance to retract your rash censures of his care; and yet will you fall into the same distemper again? Oh that

you

you would once learn this great truth, That no man evet wanted that mercy, which he wanted not an heart to truſt and wait quietly upon God for. You never yet ſought God in vain, except when you ſought him vainly.

The Fifth Corollary.

Doth God perform all things for you? then ſeek God for all by prayer, and never undertake any deſign without him: Certainly, if he do not perform it for you, you can never have what you deſire and labour for: and though he have deſigned to perform this or that mercy for you, yet for theſe things he will be enquired of that he may do it for you: *Ezek.* 36. 37. I reckon that buſineſs as good as done, that mercy as good as if it were in hand, that trouble as good as over, for the doing, enjoying, or removing whereof we have engaged God by prayer. 'Tis our folly to engage this inſtrument and that for us, to attempt this way and that to compaſs our deſign, and all the while forget him, upon whoſe pleaſure all inſtruments and means entirely depend. That which begins not with prayer, ſeldom winds up with comfort. *The way of man is not in himſelf*; if it were, prayer might then be reckon'd loſt labour. O let him that performs all, be owned and acknowledged in all.

Conſilia & preces non eo fine adhiberi, ut dei, per hæc quaſi impedimenta, mutentur decreta & deſtinatus providentiæ curſus inhibeatur: ſed ut obſequium divinæ legi præſtando, & conſuetum providentiæ ordinem obſervando conſcientia tranquilletur, & ſpe bonâ impleatur. Wendelin. Theol. p. 186.

The ſixth Corollary.

Laſtly, *If God perform all things for us, then it is our great Intereſt and concernment in all things to ſtudy to pleaſe him, upon whom we depend for all things.*

It

It is a grave and weighty observation of *Chrysostome*. Nothing (saith he) should be grievous and bitter to a Christian, but to provoke the displeasure of God. Avoid that, and no affliction or trouble whatever can cast down such a prudent Soul; but even as a spark is easily extinguish'd in the Sea, so will the favour of God extinguish those troubles. It is with such a *Soul* (saith he) as it is with the Heavens; we think the Heavens suffer when they are over-spread with clouds, and the Sun suffers when it is eclipsed; but there is no such thing, they suffer not when they seem to suffer. *Tranquillus Deus, tranquillat omnia.* Every thing is well, and shall be well, when all is well betwixt us and God. The great consolation of the Saints lyes in this, that all that concerns them is in the hands of their father. *Pene desperassem nisi Christus esset caput Ecclesiæ.* I had utterly despair'd (saith *Luther*) had not Christ been head of the Church. When he that *performs all things is our God, even our God* that delights in our prosperity, that rejoyces over us to do us good, what ample security is there in the greatest confusions and dangers? When one told *Bouromeus* that there were some that laid wait for his life, his answer was, *An Deus est in mundo pro nihilo?* What, is God in the World for nothing? And as notable was the reply of *Silentiarius* in a like case, *si Deus mei curam non habet, quid vivo?* If God take no care of me, how do I live, how have I subsisted hitherto? Though it seems a *Romance* to many (saith a late grave Author) yet we must either quit the Scripture, or give credit to this, that the most infallible Rules for one to raise his fortune and ensure a destiny that can controul

Chrysost. Hom. in 2 Cor. 7.

Author of the fulfilling of Scripture. 2 *Part*, p. 223.

troul the ſtars, are given forth there (*viz.* in the Scriptures) where that evidently is found, *Sapiens dominabitur Aſtris, & quomodo unuſquiſq? faber poteſt eſſe fortunæ ſuæ.* A good man may even be his own Carver. O that we would but ſteer our courſe according to thoſe rare politicks of the Bible, thoſe divine Maxims of Wiſdom. Fear nothing but ſin. Study nothing ſo much as how to pleaſe God. Warp not from your integrity under any temptation. Truſt God in the way of your duty. Theſe are ſure Rules to ſecure your ſelves and your Intereſt in all the Viciſſitudes of this life.

My laſt work will be to ſtate three or four practical caſes about this ſubject, and ſo I ſhall ſhut up this diſcourſe of Providence.

Firſt Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian diſcover the will of God and his own duty under dark and doubtful Providences?

In order to the clearing of this Caſe, we are to conſider, what is meant by the will of God; what by thoſe doubtful Providences, that make the diſcovery of his will difficult, and what rules are to be obſerved for the clearing up of Gods will to our ſelves under ſuch difficult and puzzling Providences.

As to the Will of God, it falls under a two-fold conſideration of his *ſecret* and *revealed* Will; this diſtinction is found in that Scripture, Deut. 29. 29. *The ſecret things belong unto the Lord our God, but thoſe things which are revealed belong unto us,* &c. The firſt is the rule of his own actions; the

the later of ours: and this only is concerned in the Quere.

This Revealed Will of God is either manifested to us in his *Word*, or in his *Works*. The former is his *commanding* Will, the later his *effecting* or *permitting* Will; the one versant about good, the other about evil.

In these ways God manifests his Will to men, but yet with great variety and difference, both as to the things revealed, the persons to whom he reveals them, and the degrees of clearness in which they are revealed.

(1.) As to the things revealed, there is great difference: for the great and necessary duties of Religion are revealed to us in the Word, with greatest perspicuity and evidence. About these there can be no hesitation; but things of a lower nature and lesser concern are left more obscure.

(2.) As to the persons to whom God reveals his Will, there is great difference; some are strong men, others babes, 1 *Cor.* 3. 1. Some have senses exercised, others are of weak and dull understanding; and we know every thing is received according to the ability and measure of the person receiving it. Hence it is that one mans way is very plain before him, he knows what he ought to do: the other is ever and anon at a loss, bivious and uncertain what to do.

(3.) The manner of Gods revealing his Will to men is also very different. Some have had special, personal, and peculiar discoveries of it made to them. So had *Samuel* about the choice of the person whom he should anoint King, 1 *Sam.* 9. 15. And so had *David*, 1 *Sam.* 23. 2, 4, 9, 10, 11, 12. where you find upon his enquiry

ry of God (likely by the *Urim* and *Thummim*) God told him what was his duty as to that expedition, and what would be the event of it.

But now, all are tyed up to the ordinary ſtanding rule of the written Word, and muſt not expect any ſuch extraordinary revelations from God. The way we now have to know the Will of God concerning us in difficult caſes, is to ſearch and ſtudy the Scriptures, and where we find no particular rule to guide us in this or that particular caſe, there we are to apply general rules, and govern our ſelves according to the Analogy and proportion they bear towards each other.

But now it often falls out, that in ſuch doubtful caſes we are entangled in our own thoughts, and put to a loſs what courſe to take. We pray with *David*, that God would *make his way plain before us*, Pſal. 5. 8. Afraid we are of diſpleaſing God, and yet doubtful we may do ſo; whether we reſolve this way, or that. And this comes to paſs not only through the difficulty of the caſe, but from our own ignorance and inadvertency? and very frequently from thoſe *Providences* that lye before us, wherein God ſeems to hint his mind to us, this way or that, and whether we may ſafely guide our ſelves by thoſe intimations of Providence, is doubtful to us.

That God doth give men ſecret hints and intimations of his Will by his Providence, cannot be doubted; but yet Providences in themſelves, are no ſtable rule of duty, nor ſufficient diſcovery of the will of God. We may ſay of them, as it is, Job 23. 8, 9. *Behold, I go forward, but he is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive him*

him: On the left Hand where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: He hideth himself on the right Hand, that I cannot see him.

If Providence in it self be allowed to be a sufficient discovery of Gods Will to us, then we shall be forced often times to justifie and condemn the same Cause or Person, forasmuch as there is *one Event happens to all*, and as it falls out to the Good, so to the Wicked, *Eccles.* 9. 2. Beside, if Providence alone were the Rule to judge any Action or Design by; then a wicked undertakement would cease to be so, if it should succeed well; but Sin is Sin still, and Duty is Duty still, what ever the Events and Issues of either be.

3. The safest way therefore to make use of Providence in such Cases is, to consider them as they follow the Commands or Promises of the Word, and not singly and separately in themselves. If you search the Scriptures with an indifferent and unbyassed Spirit, in a doubtful Case, Pray for Counsel and Direction from the Lord, attend to the dictates of Conscience. And when you have done all, shall find the Providences of God falling out agreeably to the dictates of your own Conscience, and the best Light you can find in the Word, you may in such Cases make use of it as an Encouragement to you, in the way of your Duty: But the most signal Demonstrations of Providence are not to be accepted against a Scripture Rule; no smiles or successes of Providences may in this Case encourage us to proceed; and on the other side, no frowns or discouragements of Providence should dishearten us in the way of our Duty, how many soever we should encounter therein. Holy *Job* could not find the meaning of God in his Works, yet would he not *go back from the Com-*

mandments of his Lips, Job 23. 9. The like Reſolution you find in *David*, to proceed in his Duty, and cleave to the Word, how many ſtumbling blocks ſoever Providence ſhould permit to be laid in his way. *I am become* (ſaith he) *like a bottle in the Smoke* (not only blackt, but withered up by troubles) *yet do I not forget thy Statutes*, Pſalm 119. 13. and again *Ver.* 87. *They had almoſt conſumed me upon Earth: But I forſook not thy Precepts.*

Paul by the Direction of the Spirit was engaged to go to *Jeruſalem*, Acts 20. 22. After a clear Revelation of the Mind of God to him in that Matter, how many difficult and diſcouraging Providences befel him in his way? The *Diſciples* at *Tyre* ſaid to him *by the Spirit* (though in that they followed their own Spirits) *that he ſhould not go to Jeruſalem*, Acts 21. 4.

Then at *Ceſarea* he met *Agabus* a Prophet, who told him what ſhould befal him when he came thither, *Chap.* 21. 10, 11. All this will not diſſwade him. And after all this, how paſſionately do the Brethren beſeech him to decline that Journey? *Ver.* 12, 13. Yet knowing his Rule, and reſolving to be faithful to it, he puts by all and proceeds in his Journey.

Well then, Providence in Concurrence with the Word may give ſome Encouragement to us in our Way; but no teſtimony of Providence is to be accepted againſt the Word. If Scripture and Conſcience tell you, ſuch a way is ſinful, you may not venture upon it, how many opportunities and encouragements ſoever Providence may ſuffer to offer themſelves to you, for they are only permitted for your Tryal, not your encouragement: Take this therefore for a ſure Rule,

That

That no Providence can legitimate, or justifie any Moral Evil. Nor will it be a Plea before God for any Man to say, The Providence of God gave me Encouragement to do it, though the Word gave me none. If therefore in doubtful Cases, you would discover Gods will, govern your selves in your search after it by these Rules.

1. Get the true fear of God upon your Hearts, be really afraid of offending him, God will not hide his mind from such a Soul, *Psalm* 25. 14. *The Secret of the Lord is with them that fear him, and he will shew them his Covenant.*

2. Study the *Word* more, and the concerns and Interests of the World less. The Word is a light to your Feet, *Psal.* 119. 105. (*i. e.*) it hath a discovering and directive usefulness as to all Duties to be done, and Dangers to be avoided: It is the great Oracle at which you are to enquire: Treasure up its rules in your Hearts, and you will walk safely, *Psalm* 119. 11. *Thy Word have I hid in my Heart that I might not Sin against thee.*

3. Reduce what you know into practice, and you shall know what is your Duty to practise, *John* 7. 17. *If any Man do his will he shall know of the Doctrine.* Psalm 111. 10. *A good Understanding have all they that do thereafter.*

4. Pray for *Illumination* and *Direction* in the way that you should go; beg the Lord to guide you in straits, and that he would not suffer you to fall into Sin. This was the Holy Practice of *Ezra*, *chap.* 8. 21. *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the River* Ahava, *that we might afflict our selves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.*

Read the obſcure Texts of Providence with the Comment of the word, and we cannot make a falſe interpretation of them.

5. And this being done, follow *Providence* ſo far as it agrees with the Word, and no farther. There is no uſe to be made of *Providence* againſt the *Word*, but in ſubſerviency to it. And there are two excellent uſes of *Providence* in ſubſerviency to the *Word*. (1.) *Providences* as they follow Promiſes and Prayer are Evidences of God's faithfulneſs in their Accompliſhment. When *David* languiſhed under a Diſeaſe, and his Enemies began to triumph in the Hopes of his downfal; he Prays, *Pſalm* 41. 10. That God would be merciful to him, and raiſe him up; and by that, he ſaith, *He knew the Lord favoured him, becauſe his Enemy did not triumph over him*, ver. 11. This Providence he looked upon as a token for Good, as elſewhere he calls it, *Pſal.* 86. 17. And (2.) Providences give us loud calls to thoſe Duties which the Command lays upon us, and tells us when we are actually and preſently under the Obligation of the Commands as to the Performance of them. Thus when ſad Providences befal the Church or our ſelves, they call us to Humiliation; and let us know that then the Command upon us to humble our ſelves at the Feet of God is in force upon us, *Micah* 6. 9. *The Lords Voice cryeth to the City, and the Man of Wiſdom ſhall ſee thy Name, hear the Rod, and who hath appointed it.* The Rod hath a Voice; and what doth it ſpeak? Why now is the Time to humble your ſelves under the mighty Hand of God. This is the Day of trouble in which God hath bid you to call upon him. And *e contra*, when comfortable Providences refreſh us, it now informs us, this is the time to rejoyce in God according to the Rule, *Eccleſ.* 7. 14. *In the Day of Proſperity be joyful.* Theſe Precepts bind *always*, but not *to always*. It's our Duty therefore and our

Præcepta affirmativa obligant ſemper, non ad ſemper.

our Wiſdom to diſtinguiſh Seaſons, and know the proper Duties of every Seaſon: And Providence is an *Index* that Points them out to us. Thus of the firſt Caſe.

The Second Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian be ſupported in waiting upon God whil'ſt Providence delays the Performance of the Mercies to him for which he hath long pray'd and waited?

Two Things are ſuppoſed in this Caſe.

(1.) That Providence may linger and delay the Performance of thoſe Mercies to us that we have long waited and prayed for.

(2.) That during that delay and Suſpenſion, our Hearts and Hopes may be very low, and ready to fail.

1. Providence may long delay the Performance of thoſe Mercies we have prayed and waited upon God for.

For the right underſtanding of this, know that there is a twofold Term or Seaſon fixed for the Performance of Mercy to us. One by the Lord our God, in whoſe hand Times and Seaſons are, *Acts* 1, 7. Another by our ſelves, who raiſe up our own Expectations of Mercies ſometimes meerly through the eagerneſs of our deſires after them, and ſometimes upon uncertain Conjectural grounds and appearances of Encouragement that lye before us.

Now nothing can be more Preciſe, Certain and punctual, than is the performance of Mercy at the Time and Seaſon which God hath appointed, how long ſoever it be, or how many obſtacles ſoever lye in the way of it. There was a Time prefixed by God himſelf for the perfor-

mance of that Promiſe of *Iſrael*'s deliverance out of *Egypt*; and it's ſaid, *Exod.* 12. 41. *At the end of the four hundred and thirty Years, even the ſelf ſame day it came to paſs, that all the hoſt of the Lord went out of the Land of* Egypt. Compare this with *Acts* 7. 17. and there you have the ground and Reaſon why their deliverance was not, nor could be delayed one Day longer, becauſe *the Time of the Promiſe was now come.* Promiſes like a pregnant Woman muſt accompliſh their appointed Months, and when they have ſo done, Providence will Midwife the Mercies they go big withal into the World, and not one of them ſhall miſcarry.

But for the Seaſons which are of our own fixing and appointment, as God is not tyed to them, ſo his Providences are not governed by them: And hence are our Diſappointments. *We looked for Peace, but no good came; for a Time of health, and behold trouble,* Jer. 8. 15. And hereupon is it that we fret at the delays of Providence, and ſuſpect the faithfulneſs of God in their performance. *But his Thoughts are not our Thoughts,* Iſa. 55. 8. *The Lord is not ſlack concerning his Promiſe as Men count ſlackneſs,* 2 Pet. 3. 9. It is ſlackneſs if you reckon by our own rule and meaſure, but it is not ſo, if you reckon and count it by God's. The Lord doth not compute and reckon his ſeaſons of working by our *Arithmetick.* You have both theſe Rules compared, and the ground of our miſtake detected in that Scripture, *Hab.* 2. 3. *The Viſion is yet for an appointed Time, but at the end it ſhall ſpeak, and not lye: Though it tarry, wait for it, becauſe it will ſurely come, it will not tarry.*

God appoints the Time: When that appointed time is come, the expected Mercies will not fail: But in the mean Time, *though it tarry* (ſaith the Pro-

Prophet) *wait for it, for it will not tarry.* Tarry, and not tarry, how ſhall this be reconciled? The meaning is, it may tarry much beyond *your Expectation*, but not a moment beyond *God's Appointment.*

2. During this delay of Providence, the Hearts and Hopes of the People of God may be very low, and much diſcouraged. This is too plain from what the Scriptures have recorded of others, and every one of us may find in our own Experiences. We have an Inſtance of this in *Iſa.* 49. 13, 14. in the 13. *verſe* you have God's faithful Promiſe, that *he will Comfort his People, and have Mercy upon his Afflicted.* Enough one would think to Raiſe and Comfort their Hearts. But the Mercy promiſed was long in coming, they waited from Year to Year, and ſtill the burthen preſſed them, and was not removed. And therefore *ver.* 14. Zion *ſaid, the Lord hath forſaken me and my Lord hath forgotten me*, q. d. It's in vain to look for ſuch a Mercy, God hath no regard to us, we are out of his Heart and Mind, he neither Cares for us nor Minds what becomes of us.

So it was with *David*, after God had made him ſuch a Promiſe, and in the Time thereof ſo faithfully performed it, that never was Mercy better ſecured to any Man; for they are call'd, *the ſure Mercies of* David, *Iſa.* 55. 3. Yet Providence delayed the accompliſhment of them ſo long, and ſuffered ſuch difficulties to intervene, that he even deſpairs to ſee the accompliſhment of them, but even concludes God had forgotten him too, *Pſalm* 13. 1. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever?* And what he ſpeaks here by way of *Queſtion*, he elſewhere turns into a Poſitive

Concluſion, Pſal. 116. 11. *All Men are Lyars, I ſhall one day periſh by the hand of* Saul. And the cauſes of theſe Deſpondencies, and ſinkings of Heart are partly from our ſelves, and partly from Satan. If we duly examine our own Hearts about it, we ſhall find that theſe ſinkings of Heart are

1. The immediate Effects of unbelief. We do not depend and rely upon the Word with that full Truſt and Confidence that is due to the infallible Word of a faithful and unchangeable God. You may ſee the ground of this faintneſs in that Scripture, *Pſalm* 27. 13. *I had fainted unleſs I had believed.* Faith is the only Cordial that relieves the Heart againſt theſe faintings and deſpondencies. Where this is wanting, or is weak, no wonder our Hearts ſink at this rate, when diſcouragements are before us.

2. Our judging and meaſuring things by the rules of Senſe, this is a great Cauſe of our Diſcouragements. We conclude, According to the Appearances of things will be their Iſſues. If *Abraham* had done ſo, in that great Tryal of his Faith, he had certainly loſt his footing; *but againſt Hope*, (*i. e.*) againſt natural probability, *he believed in Hope, giving Glory to God*, Rom. 4. 18. If *Paul* had done ſo, he had fainted under his Tryals, 2 *Cor.* 4. 16, 18. *We faint not* (ſaith he) *whil'ſt we look not at the things that are ſeen*, q. d. That which keeps up our Spirits, is our looking off from things preſent and viſible, and meaſuring all by another rule, *viz.* The Power and Fidelity of God firmly engaged in the Promiſes.

3. In all theſe things *Satan* manages a deſign upon us. Hence he takes occaſions to ſuggeſt hard Thoughts of God, and to beat off our Souls from

all

all Confidence in him, and Expectations from him. He is the great Make-bate betwixt God and the Saints. He reports the Difficulties and Fears that are in our way with Advantage, and labours to weaken our Hands, and discourage our Hearts in waiting upon God. And these Suggestions gain the more Credit with us, because they are confirm'd and attested by sense and feeling.

But here is a desperate design carrying on under very plausible pretences against our Souls. It concerns us to be watchful now, and maintain our Faith and Hope in God. Now blessed is he that can resign all to God, and quietly wait for his Salvation. To assist the Soul in this difficulty, I shall offer some farther help beside what hath been formerly given under the *first Caution*, in the following Considerations.

First Consideration.

Though Providence do not yet perform the Mercies you wait for, yet you have no ground to entertain hard thoughts of God; for it's possible God never gave you any ground for your Expectation of these things from him. It may be you have no *Promise* to bottom your Hope upon; and if so, why shall God be suspected and dishonoured by you in a *Case* wherein his *Truth* and *Faithfulness* was never engaged to you? If we are crossed in our outward Concernments, and see our Expectations of Prosperity dashed; if we see such or such an outward Comfort removed, from which we promised our selves much; why must God be accused for this? These things you promised your selves: But where did God Promise you Prosperity, and the Continuance of those comfortable things to you? Produce his Promise, and shew where-

wherein he hath broken it. It is not enough for you to ſay, There are general Promiſes in the Scripture, that *God will withhold no good thing*, and theſe are good things which Providence withholds from you; for that Promiſe, *Pſalm* 84. 11. Hath its Limitations, it is expreſly limited to ſuch as *walk uprightly*; and it concerns you to examine whether you have done ſo, before you quarrel with Providence for non-performance of it. Ah Friend, ſearch thine own Heart, reflect upon thine own Ways; ſeeſt thou not ſo many flaws in thine Integrity, ſo many turnings aſide from God, both in Heart and Life, that may juſtifie God, not only in withholding what thou lookeſt for, but in removing all that thou enjoyeſt? And beſides this Limitation as to the *Object*, it's limited (as all other Promiſes relating to externals are) in the matter or things premiſed by the Wiſdom and Will of God, which is the only Rule by which they are meaſured out to Men in this World, (*i.e.*) ſuch Mercies in ſuch Proportions as he ſees needful and moſt conducible to your good; aud theſe given out in ſuch Times and Seaſons as are of his own Appointment, not yours.

God never came under an abſolute unlimited tye for outward Comforts to any of us; and if we be diſappointed, we can blame none but our ſelves. Who bid us expect reſt, eaſe, delight, and things of this kind in this World? He hath never told us, we ſhall be rich, healthy and at eaſe in our Habitations; but on the contrary, he hath often told us, we muſt expect *troubles in the World*, John 16. 33. And that *through many Tribulations we muſt enter into his Kingdom*, Acts 14. 22. All that he ſtands bound to us by Promiſe for, is to *be with us in trouble*, Pſal. 91. 15.

to

to ſupply our real and abſolute needs, *Iſa.* 41. 17. *When the Poor and Needy ſeek Water, and there is none, and their Tongue faileth for thirſt, I the Lord will hear them, I the God of Iſrael will not forſake them*; and to ſanctifie all theſe Providences to our Good at laſt, *Rom.* 8. 28. *All Things ſhall Work together for good to them that Love God.* And as to all theſe things not one Tittle ever did, or ſhall fail.

Second Conſideration.

But if you ſay you have long waited upon God for ſpiritual Mercies to your Souls according to the Promiſe, and ſtill thoſe Mercies are deferred, and your Eyes fail whilſt you look for them; I would deſire you ſeriouſly to conſider of what kind thoſe ſpiritual Mercies are, for which you have ſo long waited upon God. Spiritual Mercies are of two ſorts; ſuch as belong to the *Eſſence*, the very being of the new Creature, without which it muſt fail: Or to its *well being*, and the Comfort of the inner Man; without which you cannot live ſo chearfully as you would. The Mercies of the former kind are Abſolutely neceſſary, and therefore put into Abſolute Promiſes, as you ſee, *Jer.* 32. 40. *And I will make an Everlaſting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put my fear in their Hearts, that they ſhall not depart from me.* But for the reſt they are diſpenſed to us in ſuch Meaſures, and at ſuch Seaſons as the Lord ſees fit, and many of his own People live for a long Time without them. The Donation and Continuation of the Spirit, to quicken, ſanctifie and unite us with Chriſt is neceſſary, but his Joys and Comforts

are

are not ſo. A Child of Light may *walk in darkneſs*, Iſa. 50. 10. He lives by Faith, and not by Feeling.

Third Conſideration.

You complain, Providence delays to perform to you the Mercies you have prayed and waited for; but have you right Ends in your Deſires after theſe Mercies? It may be that's the Cauſe, you ask and receive not, *James* 4. 3. The want of a good *Aim*, is the Reaſon why we want good *Succeſs* in our Prayers. It may be we Pray for Proſperity, and our End is to pleaſe the Fleſh; we look no higher than the Pleaſure and Accommodation of the Fleſh; we beg and wait for deliverance from ſuch a Trouble and Affliction, not that we might be the more expedite and prepared for Obedience, but freed of what is grievous to us, and deſtroys our Pleaſure in the World.

Certainly if it be ſo, you have more need to judge and condemn your ſelves, than to cenſure and ſuſpect the Care of God.

Fourth Conſideration.

You wait for good, and it comes not; but is your Will brought to a due Submiſſion to the Will of God about it? Certainly God will have you come to this before you enjoy your Deſires. Enjoyment of your Deſires is the thing that will pleaſe you, but Reſignation of your Wills, is that which is pleaſing to God: If your Hearts cannot come to this, Mercies cannot come to you. *David* was made to wait long for the Mercy promiſed him, yea, and to be content without it before he enjoyed it, *Pſalm* 131. 2.

He

He was brought to be *as a weaned Child*, and ſo muſt you.

Fifth Conſideration.

Your betters have waited long upon God for Mercy, and why ſhould not you? *David* waited till his *Eyes failed*, Pſal. 69. 3. The Church *waited for him in the way of his Judgments*, Iſa. 26. 8. Are you better than all the Saints that are gone befor you? Is God more obliged to you, than to all his People? They have quietly waited, and why ſhould not you?

Sixth Conſideration.

Will you loſe any thing by patient waiting upon God for Mercies? Certainly, not at all: Yea, it will turn to a double advantage to you to continue in a quiet ſubmiſſive waiting poſture upon God. For, (1.) Though you do not yet enjoy the good you wait for, yet all this while you are exerciſing your Grace; and it's more excellent to act Grace, than to enjoy Comfort. All this while the Lord is training you up in the exerciſe of Faith and Patience, and bending your Wills in Submiſſion to himſelf; and what do you loſe by that? Yea, and (2.) When ever the deſired Mercy comes, it will be ſo much the ſweeter to you: For, look how much Faith and Prayer hath been employed to produce it, how many wreſtlings you have had with God for it, ſo many more Degrees of ſweetneſs you will find in it, when it comes. O therefore, faint not, how long ſoever God delay you.

Seventh Conſideration.

Are not thoſe Mercies you expect from God worth the waiting for? If not, it is your folly to be

be troubled for the want of them: If they be, why don't you continue waiting? Is it not all that God expects from you for the Mercies he beſtows upon you, that you wait upon him for them? You know you have not deſerved the leaſt of them at his Hands. You expect them not as a *recompence*, but a *free favour*, and if ſo, then certainly the leaſt you can do, is to wait upon his Pleaſure for them.

Eighth Conſideration.

Conſider how many Promiſes are made in the Word to waiting Souls. One Scripture calls them *bleſſed that wait for him*, Iſa. 30. 18. Another tells us, *none that wait for him ſhall be aſhamed*, Pſalm 25. 3. (*i. e.*) they ſhall not be finally diſappointed, but at laſt be Partakers of their Hopes. A third Scripture tells us, *they that wait upon the Lord, ſhall renew their ſtrength*, Iſa. 40. 31. a Promiſe you had need make much uſe of in ſuch a fainting Time, with many more of like Nature; and ſhall we faint at this rate in the midſt of ſo many cordials as are prepared to revive us in theſe Promiſes?

Ninth Conſideration.

How long hath God waited upon you when you will comply with his Commands, come up to your Engagements and Promiſes? You have made God wait long for your Reformation and Obedience; and therefore have no Reaſon to think it much, if God make you wait long for your Conſolation. We have our *How longs*, and hath not God his? We cry, *Pſalm 6. 3. But thou O Lord, how long?* Pſalm 13. 1, 2. *How long wilt thou forget me, O Lord, for ever? How long wilt thou*

thou hide thy Face from me? How long ſhall I take Counſel in my Soul, having ſorrow in my Heart daily? How long ſhall mine enemy be exalted over me? But ſurely we ſhould not think theſe things long, when we conſider, how long the Lord hath exerciſed his Patience about us. We have made him ſay, How long, how long? Our *unbelief* hath made him cry, *How long will it be ere they believe me?* Numb. 14. 11. Our corrupt Hearts have made him cry, *How long ſhall vain thoughts lodge within thee?* Jer. 4. 14. Our impure Natures and Ways have made him cry, *How long will it be ere they attain to innocency?* Hoſea 8. 5. If God wait upon you with ſo much Patience for your Duties, well may you wait upon him for his Mercies.

Tenth Conſideration.

This impatience and infidelity of yours, expreſt in your wearineſs to wait any longer, as it is a great Evil in it ſelf, ſo very probably it is that Evil which obſtructs the way of your expected Mercies: You might have your Mercies ſooner, if your Spirits were quieter and more ſubmiſſive.

And thus of the Second Caſe.

The Third Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian diſcern when a Providence is ſanctified, and comes from the Love of God to him?

There are two ſorts or kinds of Providences verſant about Men in this World, the Iſſues and Events of which are vaſtly different, yea, contrary to each other.

1. To ſome all Providences are over-ruled and ordered for good, according to that bleſſed Pro-

Promiſe, *Rom.* 8. 28. Not only things that are good in themſelves, as Ordinances, Graces, Duties and Mercies; but things that are Evil in themſelves, as Temptations, Afflictions, and even their Sins and Corruptions ſhall turn in the Iſſue to their Advantage and Benefit. For though Sin be ſo *intrinſecally* and *formally* Evil in its own Nature, that in it ſelf it be not capable of Sanctification; yet out of this worſt of Evils God can work good to his People; and though he never make Sin the *Inſtrument* of good, yet his Providence may make it the *occaſion* of good to his People; ſo that ſpiritual Benefits may by the wiſe over-ruling of Providence be occaſioned to the People of God by it.

And ſo for Afflictions of all kinds, the greateſt and ſoreſt of them; they do work in the influence of Providence a great deal of good to the Saints, and that not only as the occaſions, but as the Inſtruments and Means of it, *Iſa.* 27. 9. *By this ſhall the Iniquity of Jacob be purged,* (*i. e.*) by the inſtrumentality of this ſanctified Affliction.

2. To others nothing is ſanctified either as an Inſtrument or occaſion of any ſpiritual good but as the worſt things are ordered to the Benefit of the Saints, ſo the beſt things wicked Men enjoy do them no good. Their Prayers are turned into Sin, *Pſalm* 109. 7. The Ordinances are the ſavour of Death, 2 *Cor.* 2. 16. The Grace of God turned into wantonneſs, *Jude* v. 4. Chriſt himſelf a rock of Offence, 1 *Pet.* 2. 8. Their Table a ſnare, *Pſal.* 69. 22. Their *Proſperity* their ruine, *Prov.* 1. 32. As Perſons are, ſo things work for good or evil, *Tit.* 1. 15. *To the pure all things are pure, but to them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure.*

Seeing

Seeing therefore the Events of Providence fall out so oppoſite to each other upon the Godly, and Ungodly; every thing farthering the Eternal Good of the one, and the Ruine of the other; it cannot but be acknowledged a moſt important Caſe in which every Soul is deeply concern'd, whether the Providences under which he is, be ſanctified to him or no?

For the Clearing of which I ſhall Premiſe two neceſſary Conſiderations, and then ſubjoyn the Rules which will be uſeful for the Determination of the Queſtion.

And firſt, Let it be conſidered, that we cannot know from the Matter of the things before us, whether they be ſanctified or unſanctified to us; for ſo conſider'd, *All things come alike to all; and no Man knoweth either love or hatred by all the things that are before him*, *Eccleſ.* 9. 1, 2. We cannot underſtand the mind and *Heart* of God, by the things he diſpenſeth with his *Hand*. If proſperous Providences befal us, we cannot ſay, Herein is a ſure ſign that God loves me; for who have more of thoſe Providences than the People of his Wrath? *Pſalm* 73. 7. *They have more than their Hearts can wiſh.* Sure that muſt be a weak Evidence for *Heaven*, which accompanies ſo great a part of the World to *Hell*. By theſe things we may teſtifie our love to God; but from ten thouſand ſuch enjoyments we cannot get any ſolid aſſurance of his Love to us.

And from adverſe afflictive Providences we cannot know his hatred. If afflictions, great afflictions many afflictions, long continued afflictions ſhould ſet a brand, or fix a Character of Gods hatred upon the Perſons on whom they fall; where then

ſhall we find Gods people in the world? We muſt then ſeek out the proud vain ſenſual wantons of the world, who ſpend their days in pleaſure, and ſay theſe are the men whom God loves.

Outward things are promiſcuouſly diſpenſed, and no man's ſpiritual eſtate is diſcernable by the view of his temporal. When God draws the Sword, it may *cut off the righteous* as well as *the wicked*, *Ezek.* 21. 3.

2. Tho the Providences of God *materially* conſidered afford no evidence of Gods love to us, yet the *manner* in which they befal us, and the effects and fruits they produce in us, do diſtinguiſh them very manifeſtly; and by them we may diſcern whether they be ſanctified Providences, and fruits of the love of God, or no. But yet theſe effects and fruits of Providences by which we diſcern their nature, do not always preſently appear; but time muſt be allowed for the ſouls exerciſe under them. As it is *Heb.* 12. 11. *Now no affliction for the preſent ſeemeth joyous, but grievous: nevertheleſs afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruits of Righteouſneſs unto them which are exerciſed thereby.*

The benefit of a *Providence* is diſcern'd as that of a *medicine* is, for the preſent it gripes, and makes the ſtomach ſick and loathing; but afterwards we find the benefit of it in our recovery of health and chearfulneſs. Now the Providences of God being ſome of them comfortable, and others ſad and grievous to nature, and the way to diſcern the ſanctification and bleſſing of them, being by the manner in which they come and their operations upon our ſpirits; I ſhall conſider the

the caſe as it reſpects both ſorts of Providences, and ſhew you what effects of our troubles or comforts will ſpeak them to be ſanctified and bleſſed to us.

And firſt for ſad and afflictive Providences in what kind or degree ſoever they befal us, we may warrantably conclude, they are bleſſings to us, and come from the love of God, when

1. They come in a proper ſeaſon, when we have need of them, either to prevent ſome ſin we are falling into, or recover us out of a remiſs, ſupine, and careleſs frame of ſpirit into which we are already fallen, 1 *Pet.* 1. 6. *if need be, ye are in heavineſs.* Certainly, it is a good ſign that God deſigns your good by thoſe troubles which are ſo fitted and wiſely order'd to nick the opportunity. If you ſée the Husbandman lopping a tree in the proper Seaſon, it argues he aims at the fruitfulneſs and flouriſhing of it; but to do the ſame thing at *Midſummer* ſpeaks no regard to it, yea, his deſign to deſtroy it.

2. When they are fitted both for *quality* and *degree* to work properly upon our moſt predominant corruptions, then they look like ſanctified ſtrokes. The Wiſdom of God is much ſeen in the choice of his rods. It is not any kind of trouble that will work upon and purge every ſin; but when God chuſes for ſuch afflictions as like Phyſick are appropriated to the diſeaſe the ſoul labours under; this ſpeaks divine care and love. Thus we may obſerve, it's uſual with God to ſmite us in thoſe very comforts which ſtole away too much of the love and delight of our ſouls from God: to croſs us in thoſe things from which we raiſed up too great expectations of

comfort. These Providences speak the jealousie of God over us, and his care to prevent far worse evils by these sad but needful strokes. And so for the degrees of our troubles, sanctified strokes are *ordinarily* fitted by the wisdom of God to the strength and ability of our inherent grace, *Isa.* 17. 8. *in measure when it shooteth forth thou wilt debate with it: he stayeth his rough wind in the day of the east wind.* It is an *Allusion* to a *Physician* who exactly weighs and measures all the ingredients which he mingles in a potion for his sick patient; that it may be proportionate to his strength and no more: and so much the next words intimate, *by this therefore shall the iniquity of* Jacob *be purged.*

3. It is a good sign our troubles are sanctified to us, when they turn our hearts against sin, and not against God, There be few great afflictions which befall men, but they make them quarrelsome and discontented. Wicked men quarrel with God, and are filled with discontent against him. So the Scripture describes them, *Rev.* 17. 9. *They were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, which hath power over these plagues.* But Godly men to whom afflictions are sanctified, they Justified God, and fall out with sin, they condemn themselves and give glory to God, *Dan.* 9. 7. *O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces,* &c. And *Lam.* 3. 39. *Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?* Happy afflictions which make the Soul fall out and quarrel only with sin.

4. It is sure sign afflicting Providences are sanctified when they purge the heart from sin, and leave

leave both heart and life more pure, heavenly, mortified, and humble than they found them. Sanctified afflictions are cleansers, they pull down the pride, refine the earthliness, and purge out the vanity of the Spirit. So you read, *Dan.* 11. 35. it purifies and makes their Souls white: Hence it's compar'd to a *furnace* which separates the dross from the pure mettal, *Isa.* 48. 10. *Behold I have refined thee, but not with Silver: I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction.* But for wicked men, let them be never so long in the *Furnace*, they lose no dross, *Ezek.* 24. 6. How many Christians can bear witness to this truth! After some sharp affliction hath been upon them, how is the earthliness of their hearts purged! they see no beauty, taste no more relish in the world than in the white of an Egg. Oh how serious, humble, and heavenly are they, till the impressions made upon them by afflictions be worn off, and their deceitful lusts have again entangled them! And this is the reason why we are so often under the discipline of the rod. Let a Christian (saith a late writer be but two or three years without an affliction, and he is almost good for nothing: he cannot pray, nor meditate, nor discourse at that rate he was wont to do: but when a new affliction comes, now he can find his tongue, and come to his knees again, and live at another rate.

5. It is a good sign afflicted Providences are sanctified to us, when we draw near to God under them and *turn to him that smites us.* A wicked man under affliction *revolts more and more*, *Isa.* 1. 5. *turns not to him that smites him*, *Isa.* 9. 13. but grows worse than before; formality is turned into stupidity and dedolency.

But if God afflict his own people with a sanctified rod, it awakens them to a more earnest seeking of God: it makes them pray more frequently, spiritually and fervently than ever. When *Paul* was buffeted by Satan, he *besought the Lord thrice*, 2 *Cor.* 12. 8.

6. We may conclude our afflictions to be sanctified, and to come from the love of God to us, when they do not alienate our hearts from God, but inflame our love to him. This is a sure rule, Whatever ends in the increase of our love to God, proceeds from the love of God to us. A wicked man finds his heart rising against God, when he smites him; but a gracious heart cleaves the closer to him: he can love, as well as justifie an afflicting God. *All this is come upon us: yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsly in thy Covenant: our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way: though thou hast sore broken us in the place of Dragons, and covered us with the shadow of Death*, *Psal.* 44. 17, 18, 19. Here you have a true account of the temper and frame of a gracious soul under greatest afflictions. To be *broken in the place of Dragons and covered with the shadow of death* imports the most dismal state of affliction: yet even then a gracious heart turns not back (*i. e.*) doth not for all this abate one drachm of love to God: God is as good and dear to him in afflictions as ever.

7 Lastly, We may call our afflictions sanctified when *divine teachings* accompany them to our souls, *Psal.* 94. 12. *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O Lord, and teacheſt him out of thy law.* Sanctified afflictions are *eye-salve*, they teach us

sensi-

sensibly and effectually when the Spirit accompanies them; the evil of sin, the vanity of the creature, the necessity of securing things that cannot be shaken. Never doth a Christian take a truer measure both of his corruptions and graces, than under the rod. Now a man sees that filthiness that hath been long contracting in prosperity, what interest the Creature hath in the heart, how little faith, patience, resignation, and self-denyal we can find, when God calls us to the exercise of them. O'tis a blessed sign, that trouble is sanctified, that makes a man thus turn it upon his own heart, search it, and humble himself before the Lord for the evils of it!

2. In the next place let us take into consideration the other branch of Providences which are comfortable and pleasant. Sometimes it smiles upon us in successes, prosperity, and the gratification of the desires of our hearts. Here the Question will be how the sanctification of these Providences may be discovered to us? For resolution in this matter, I shall for clearness sake lay down two sorts of Rules; one Negative, the other Positive.

First *Negative.*

1. It is a sign, that comfort is not sanctified to us, which comes not (ordinarily) in the way of Prayer. *The wicked boasteth of his hearts desire, and blesseth the covetous whom the Lord abhorreth. The wicked through the pride of his countenance will not seek after God; God is not in all his thoughts, Psal.* 10. 3, 4. Here you see Providence may give

men *their Hearts desire*, and yet they never once open their Desires to God in Prayer about it. But then those gifts of Providence are only such as are bestowed on the worst of Men, and are not the Fruits of Love.

2. Whatever Success, Prosperity or Comfort Men acquire by sinful *mediums*, and indirect Courses, are not sanctified Mercies to them. This is not the Method in which those Mercies are bestowed. *Better is a little with Righteousness, than great Revenues without right*, Prov. 16. 8. Better upon this account, that it comes in Gods way, and with his blessing, which never follows the way of Sin. God hath cursed the ways of Sin, and no blessing can follow them.

3. Whatever Prosperity and Success makes Men forget God, and cast off the care of Duty, is not sanctified to them. It is unsanctified Prosperity which lulls Men asleep into a deep Oblivion of God, *Deut.* 32. 13, 14, 15, 18, *He made him ride on the high Places of the Earth that he might eat the increase of the Fields; and he made him to suck Honey out of the Rock, and Oyl out of the flinty Rock, Butter of Kine, and Milk of Sheep, with Fat of Lambs, and Rams of the breed of Bashan, and Goats, with the Fat of Kidneys of Wheat, and thou didst drink the pure Blood of the Grape; but Jesurun waxed Fat and Kicked; thou art waxed Fat, thou art grown Thick, thou art covered with Fatness: Then he forsook God which made him, and lightly esteemed the Rock of his Salvation. Of the Rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten God that formed thee.* Rare fumant felicibus aræ.

4. When Prosperity is abused to Sensuality, and meerly

meerly serves as fuel to maintain Fleshly Lusts, it is not sanctified. See *Job* 21. 11, 12, 13. *They send forth their little ones like a Flock, and their Children Dance. They take the Timbrel and Harp, and rejoyce at the sound of the Organ. They spend their Days in Wealth, and in a moment go down to the Grave.*

5. It's a sign that Prosperity is not sanctified to Men, when it swells the Heart with Pride and Self-conceitedness, *Dan.* 4. 29, 30. *At the end of twelve Months he walked in the Palace of the Kingdom of Babylon. The King spake and said, Is not this great Babylon that I have built for the House of the Kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the Honour of my Majesty?*

6. That Success is not sanctified to Men, which takes them off from their Duty, and makes them wholly negligent, or very much indisposed to it, *Jer.* 2. 31. *O generation, see the Word of the Lord; have I been a Wilderness unto Israel? A land of darkness? Wherefore say my People, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?*

7. Nor can we think that Prosperity sanctified, which wholly swallows up the Souls of Men in their own Enjoyments, and makes them regardless of publick Miseries or Sins, *Amos* 6. 4, 5, 6. *They lye upon Beds of Ivory, and stretch themselves upon their Couches, and eat the Lambs out of the Flock, and the Calves out of the midst of the Stall. They chant to the sound of the Viol, and invent to themselves Instruments of Musick like David. They drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief Ointments; but they are not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.*

But

But then *Positively.*

1. Those mercies and comforts are undoubtedly sanctified to men, which humble their souls kindly before God in the sense of their own vileness and unworthiness of them, Gen. 32. 10. *And Jacob said, I am not worthy of the least of all thy mercies,* &c.

2. Sanctified mercies are commonly turned into Cautions against sin, *Ezra.* 9. 13. they are so many bands of restraint upon the soul that hath them, to make them shun sin.

3. They will engage a mans heart in love to the God of his mercies, *Psal.* 18. 1. compared with the *Title.*

4. They never satisfie a man as his Portion, nor will the soul accept all the prosperity in the world upon that score, Heb. 11. 26. *Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.*

5. Nor do they make men regardless of Publick sins or miseries, *Nehem.* 2. 1, 2, 3. compared with *Acts* 7. 23.

6. It's a sure sign that mercies are sanctified, when they make the soul more expedite and enlarged for God in duty, 2 Chron. 17. 5, 6. *Therefore the Lord stablished the Kingdom in his hand, and all Judah brought to Jehoshaphat presents, and he had riches and honour in abundance. And his heart was lift up in the ways of the Lord,* &c.

7. To conclude, That which is obtained by prayer, and returned to God again in due praise carries his own testimonials with it, that it came

came from the love of God, and is a ſanctified mercy to the ſoul.

And ſo much of this Third Caſe.

The Fourth Caſe.

How may we attain unto an evenneſs and ſteddineſs of ſpirit under the Changes and contrary Aſpects of Providence upon us?

Three things are ſuppoſed in this Caſe.

1. That Providence hath various and contrary Aſpects upon the people of God.
2. That it is a common thing with them, to experience great diſorders of ſpirit under thoſe Changes of Providence.
3. That theſe diſorders may be (at leaſt in a great meaſure) prevented, by the due uſe and application of thoſe rules and helps that God hath given us in ſuch Caſes.

1. That Providence hath various, yea, contrary Aſpects upon the people of God, is a caſe ſo plain, that it needs no more than the mentioning, to let it in to all our Underſtandings. Which of all the people of God have not felt this truth? Providence rings the changes all the world over, *He encreaſeth the Nations, and deſtroyeth them; he enlargeth the Nations, and ſtraitneth them again*, Job 12. 23. The ſame it doth with perſons, *Pſal* 102. 10. *Thou haſt lifted me up, and caſt me down.* See what a ſad Alteration Providence made upon the Church, Lam. 1. 1, 12. *How doth the City ſit ſolitary that was full of people! How is ſhe become as a Widow! She that was great among the Nations, and Princeſs among the Provinces, how is ſhe become tributary!*

Is

Is it nothing to you, all ye that paſs by? Behold and ſee, if there be any ſorrow like unto my ſorrow, which is done unto me, wherewith the Lord hath afflicted me in the day of his fierce anger. And how great an Inſtance was *Job* of this Truth, *Job* 29. *per tot.* and 30. compared? How many thouſands have complained with *Naomi*, whoſe condition hath been ſo ſtrangely altered, that others have ſaid as the People of *Bethlehem* did of her, *Is this Naomi?* Ruth 1. 19, 20, 21.

2. Theſe Viciſſitudes of Providence commonly cauſe great diſorders of Spirit in the beſt Men. Look as intenſe *heat* and *cold* try the ſtrength and ſoundneſs of the Conſtitution of our Bodies, ſo the *Alterations* made by Providence upon our Conditions, try the ſtrength of our Graces; and too often diſcover the weakneſs and corruption of holy Men. *Hezekiah* was a good Man: but yet his weakneſs and corruption was bewrayed by the Alterations Providence made upon his Conditions. When ſickneſs and pains ſummoned him to the grave, what bitter complaints and deſpondencies are recorded? in *Iſa.* 38. *per tot.* and when Providence lifted him up again into a proſperous Condition, what Oſtentation and vain glory did he diſcover? *Iſa.* 39. 2. *David* had more than a common ſtock of inherent Grace, yet not enough to keep him in an equal temper of Spirit under great Alterations, *Pſalm* 30. 6, 7. *In my Proſperity I ſaid I ſhall never be moved; thou hideſt thy Face and I was troubled.* It is not every Man can ſay with *Paul*, *I know both how to be abaſed, and I know how to abound every where, and in all things I am inſtructed both to be full, and to be hungry, both to abound*

and

and to ſuffer need, Phil. 4. 12. He is truly rich in Grace, whoſe Riches or Poverty neither hinders the acting, nor impoveriſheth the ſtock of his Graces.

3. Though the beſt men be ſubject to ſuch diſorders of Heart under the changes of Providence; yet theſe diſorders may in a great meaſure be prevented by the due Application of ſuch Rules and helps, as God hath given us in ſuch Caſes.

Now, theſe *helps* are ſuited to a threefold *Aſpect* of Providence upon us: *viz.*

1. Comfortable,
2. Calamitous,
3. Doubtful.

To all which I ſhall ſpeak particularly and briefly.

Queſt. 1.

How may we attain to an Evenneſs and Steddineſs of Heart under the *Comfortable* Aſpects of Providence upon us?

Under Providences of this kind, the great danger is, leſt the Heart be lifted up with Pride and Vanity, and fall into a drowſie and remiſs temper. To prevent this, we had need urge humbling and awakening *Conſiderations* upon our own Hearts; ſuch are theſe that follow.

Firſt Conſideration.

Theſe Gifts of Providence are common to the worſt of Men, and are no ſpecial diſtinguiſhing Fruits of Gods Love. The vileſt of Men have been filled even to ſatiety with theſe things, *Pſal.* 73. 7. *Their Eyes ſtand out with Fatneſs: They have more than Heart could wiſh.*

Second

Second Consideration.

Think how unstable and changeable all these things are. What you glory in to day, may be none of yours to morrow, Prov. 23. 5. *Riches make themselves wings, and flee away as an Eagle towards Heaven.* As the Wings of a Fowl grow out of the substance of the body, so the cause of the Creatures transitorines is in it self: It's subjected to *vanity*, and that vanity, like Wings, carries it away: they are but *fading flowers*, James 1. 10.

Third Consideration.

The Change of Providences is never nearer to the people of God, than when their hearts are lifted up, or grown secure by prosperity. Doth *Hezekiah* glory in his Treasures? The next news he hears, is of an impoverishing Providence at hand, *Isa.* 39. 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7. Others may be left to perish in unsanctified Prosperity, but you shall not.

Fourth Consideration.

This is a great discovery of the Carnality and corruption that is in thy heart: it argues an heart little set upon God, little mortified to the world, little acquainted with the vanity and ensnaring nature of these things. O you know not what hearts you have, till such Providences try them. And is not such a discovery matter of deep humiliation?

Fifth Consideration.

Was it not better with you in a low condition, than it is now? Reflect, and compare state with

with ſtate, and time with time. How is the frame of your hearts altered with the alteration of your condition? So God complains of *Iſrael*, Hoſea 13. 5, 6. *I did know thee in the Wilderneſs, the land of drought; according to their paſture, ſo were they filled: they were filled, and their heart was exalted, therefore have they forgotten me ſaith thee Lord*: *q. d.* You and I were better acquainted formerly when you were in a low condition; Proſperity hath eſtranged you, and altered the caſe. How ſad is it, that Gods mercies ſhould be the occaſion of our eſtrangement from him?

Queſt. 2.

Upon the other ſide, it's worth conſidering how our hearts may be eſtabliſht and kept ſteddy under *Calamitous* and *adverſe Providences.*

Here we are in equal danger of the other Extream, *viz.* deſpondency and ſinking under the frowns and ſtrokes of croſs Providences. Now to ſupport and eſtabliſh the heart in this caſe, take three helps.

Firſt Conſideration.

Firſt, Conſider, That afflictive Providences are of great uſe to the people of God, they cannot live without them. The Earth doth not more need chaſtening froſts, and mellowing ſnows, than our hearts do nipping Providences. Let the beſt Chriſtian be but a few years without them, and he will be ſenſible of the want of them; he will find a ſad *remiſſion* and declining upon all his graces.

Second

Second Consideration.

No stroke of Calamity upon the People of God, can *seperate* them from Christ, *Rom.* 8. 35. *Who shall separate us from the Love of Christ? Shall Tribulation?* There was a time when *Job* could call nothing in this World but *trouble* his own: He could not say, my Estate, my Honour, my Health, my Children; for all these were gone; yet then he could say, *my Redeemer*, Job 19. 25. Well then, there is no cause to sink whilst Interest in Christ remains sure to us.

Third Consideration.

All your Calamities will have an end shortly. The longest Day of the Saints troubles hath an End; and then, no more troubles for ever. The troubles of the wicked will be to Eternity; but you shall *suffer but a while*, 1 Pet. 5. 10. If a *thousand* troubles be appointed for you, they will come to *one* at last, and after that no more: Yea, and though our troubles *be but for a moment, yet they work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of Glory.* Let that support your Hearts under all your sufferings.

Quest. 3.

Lastly, Let us consider, what may be useful to support and quiet our Hearts under *doubtful Providences*, when our dear Concernments hang in a doubtful suspence before us, and we know not which way the Providence of God will cast and determine them.

Now the best Hearts are apt to grow solicitous and pensive, distracted with thoughtfulness about

about the Event and Issue. To relieve and settle us in this Case, the following Considerations are very useful.

First Consideration.

First, Let us consider the Vanity and Inutility of such a solicitude, *Matth.* 6. 27. *Which of you* (saith our Lord) *by taking Thought can add one Cubit?* We may break our Peace, and waste our Spirits, but not alter the Case. We cannot turn God out of his way, *Job* 23. 13. *He is in one Mind.* We may by strugling against God increase, but not avoid or lighten our Troubles.

Second Consideration.

How often do we Afflict and Torment our selves by our own unquiet Thoughts, when there is no real cause or ground for so doing? *Isa.* 51. 13. ——— *And hast feared continually every Day, because of the Fury of the Oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy, and where is the Fury of the Oppressor?* O what abundance of Disquiet and Trouble might we prevent, by waiting quietly till we see the Issues of Providence, and not bringing as we do the Evils of the Morrow upon the Day?

Third Consideration.

How great ground of quietness is it that the whole Dispose and Management of all our Affairs and Concerns is in the Hand of our own God and Father! No Creature can touch us without his Commission or Permission. *I know* (saith Christ) *thou couldst have no Power against me, except it were given thee from above,* John

19. 11. Neither Men nor Devils can act any thing without Gods leave; and be ſure he will ſign no Order to your Prejudice.

Fourth Conſideration.

How great Satisfaction muſt it be to all that believe the Divine Authority of the Scripture, that the faithfulneſs of God ſtands engaged for every Line and Syllable found therein? And how many bleſſed Lines in the Bible may we Mark, that reſpect even our outward Concerns, and the happy Iſſue of them all? Upon theſe two grounds, *viz.* That our outward Concerns with their ſteddy Direction to a bleſſed End is found in the Word; and this Word being of Divine Authority, the faithfulneſs and honour of God ſtands good for every Tittle that is found there. I ſay theſe are grounds of ſuch ſtability, that our Minds may repoſe with greateſt Security and Confidence upon them even in the cloudieſt Day of trouble. Not only your Eternal Salvation, but your temporal Intereſts are there ſecured. Be quieted therefore in the Confidence of a bleſſed Iſſue.

Fifth Conſideration.

How great and ſure an expedient have the Saints ever found it to their own Peace, to commit all doubtful Iſſues of Providence to the Lord, and devolve all their Cares upon him, *Prov.* 16. 3. *Commit thy Works unto the Lord, and thy Thoughts ſhall be eſtabliſhed.* By *Works* he means any doubtful, intricate, perplexing buſineſs, about which our Thoughts are rackt and tortur'd. Roll all theſe upon the Lord by Faith, leave them with him, and the preſent immediate Benefit you ſhall have by it (beſides the Comfort in the laſt iſſue) ſhall be

be tranquillity and Peace in your Thoughts. And who is there of any ſtanding or Experience in Religion that hath not found it ſo?

The Fifth Caſe.

How may a Chriſtian work his Heart into a reſigning frame unto the Will of God, when ſad Providences approach him, and preſage great Troubles and Afflictions coming on towards him?

For the right ſtating and reſolving of this important *Caſe*, it will be needful to ſhew (1.) What is not included and intended in the Queſtion. (2.) What it doth ſuppoſe and include in it, and laſtly, what helps and directions are neceſſary for the due Performance of this great and difficult Duty.

Firſt, *Negatively*.

As to the firſt, It muſt be premiſed that the Queſtion doth not ſuppoſe the Heart or Will of a Chriſtian to be at his own command and diſpoſe in this Matter: We cannot reſign it, and ſubject it to the Will of God whenever we deſire ſo to do: The *Duty* indeed is *ours*, but the *Power* by which alone we perform it is *Gods*: We act as we are acted by the Spirit. It is with our Hearts, as with *Meteors* hanging in the Air, by the influence of the Sun; while that continues they abide above, but when it fails they fall to the Earth: We can do this, and all things elſe be they never ſo difficult, *through Chriſt that ſtrengthens us*, Phil. 4. 13. But *without him we can do nothing*, John 15. 5. He doth not ſay, without me ye can do but little, or without me ye can do nothing but with great difficulty, or without me ye can do nothing perfectly;

but without me ye can do nothing at all. And every Christian hath a witness in his own Breast to attest this Truth: For there are Cases frequently occurring in the Methods of Providence, in which, notwithstanding all their Prayers and Desires, all their Reasonings and Strivings, they cannot quiet their Hearts fully in the Dispose, and Will of God; but on the contrary do find all their endeavours in this matter, to be but as the rolling of a returning Stone against the Hill: Till God say to the Heart be still, and to the Will give up, nothing can be done.

Secondly, *Affirmatively.*

Next, Let us consider what this Case doth suppose, and include in it, and we shall find

1. That it supposeth the People of God to have a foresight of Troubles and Distresses approaching and drawing near to them: I confess 'tis not always so, for many of our Afflictions, as well as Comforts, come by way of *surprizals* upon us: But oft times we have forewarnings of Troubles both *Publick* and *Personal*, before we feel them: As the weather may be discerned by the Face of the Sky, when we see a Morning Sky red and lowring, this is a natural sign of a foul and rainy Day, *Matth.* 16. 3. And there are as certain signs of the Times, whereby we may discern when Trouble is near, even at the Door: And these forewarnings are given by the Lord to awaken us to our Duties, by which they may either be prevented, *Zeph.* 2. 1, 2. or sanctified and sweetned to us when they come. These signs and notices of approaching troubles are gathered *partly* from the *Observation* and Collation of parallel Scripture Cases and Examples, God generally holding one tenour

tenour and ſteddy courſe in the Adminiſtrations of his Providences in all Ages, 1 *Cor.* 10. 6. *partly* from the *Reflections* Chriſtians make upon the Frames and Tempers of their own Hearts, which greatly need awakening, humbling and purging Providences. For let a Chriſtian be but a few Years or Months without a Rod, and how formal, earthly, dead and vain, will his Heart grow? And ſuch a temper preſages Affliction to them that are beloved of the Lord, as really as the giving or ſweating of the ſtones doth rain. Laſtly, The ordering and diſpoſing of the next Cauſes into a Poſture and Preparation for our Trouble, plainly premoniſheth us that Trouble is at the Door. Thus when the Symptoms of ſickneſs begin to appear upon our own Bodies, the Wife of our Boſom, or our Children that are as our own Souls, Providence herein awakens our Expectations of Death and doleful Separations: So when Enemies combine together and plot the Ruine of our Liberties, Eſtates, or Lives, and God ſeemeth to looſe the bridle of Reſtraint upon their Necks, now we cannot but be alarmed with the near approach of Troubles, eſpecially when at the ſame time our Conſcience ſhall reflect upon the abuſe and non-improvement of theſe our threatned Comforts.

2. The Caſe before us ſuppoſeth, that theſe Premonitions and fore-runners of Affliction, do uſually very much diſturb the Order and break the Peace of our Souls, they put the mind under great Diſcompoſure, the Thoughts under much diſtraction, and the Affections into Tumults and Rebellion.

Ah how unwilling are we to ſurrender to the Lord the Loan which he lent us! To be diſquieted

by troubles when at eaſe in our Enjoyments! How unwelcome are the Meſſengers of Affliction to the beſt Men! We are ready to ſay to them as the Widow to *Elijah*, *What have I to do with thee, O Man (O Meſſenger) of God, art thou come unto me to call my Sin to remembrance, and to ſlay my Son?* 1 *Kings* 17. 18. And this ariſeth partly from the remains of Corruption in the beſt Souls, for though every ſanctified Perſon is come by his own Conſent into the Kingdom, and under the Government and Scepter of Chriſt, and every thought of his Heart *de jure*, and of right muſt be ſubjected to him, 2 *Cor.* 10. 5. Yet *de facto* the Conqueſt and Power of Grace is but incompleat and in part, and natural Corruption like *Jeroboam* with his vain Men riſeth up againſt it, and cauſeth many Mutinies in the Soul, whil'ſt Grace like young *Abijah* is weak handed, and cannot reſiſt them. And partly from the advantage Satan makes upon the ſeaſon to irritate and aſſiſt our Corruptions: He knows that which is already in motion, is the more eaſily moved. In this Confuſion and hurry of Thoughts he undiſcernedly ſhuffles in his Temptations. Sometimes aggravating the Evils which we fear with all the ſinking and overwhelming Circumſtances imaginable. Sometimes divining and fore-caſting ſuch Events and Evils, as (haply) never fall out. Sometimes repining at the diſpoſes of God as more ſevere to us than others. And ſometimes reflecting with very unbelieving and unworthy Thoughts upon the Promiſes of God, and his faithfulneſs in them, by all which the Affliction is made to ſink deep into the Soul before it actually comes. The Thoughts are ſo diſordered, that Duty cannot be duly performed. And the Soul is really weakned,

ned, and disabled to bear its tryal when it comes indeed: Just as if a Man should be kept waking and restless all the Night with the Thoughts of his hard Journey which he must Travel to Morrow, and so when to Morrow is come, he faints for want of Rest, Midway his Journey.

3. It is here supposed to be the Christians great Duty, under the Apprehensions of approaching Troubles to resign his Will to Gods, and quietly commit the Events and Issues of all to him, whatever they may prove. Thus did *David* in the like Case and Circumstances, 2 *Sam.* 15. 25, 26. *And the King said unto* Zadock, *carry back the Ark of God into the City. If I shall find favour in the Eyes of the Lord, he will bring me back again, and shew me both it and his habitation: But if he shall thus say, I have no delight in thee, behold here am I, let him do to me as seemeth good to him.*

O lovely and truly Christian Temper! *q. d.* go *Zadock*, return with the Ark to its place, though I have not the *symbol*, yet I hope I shall have the *real presence* of God with me in this sad Journey: How he will dispose the Events of this sad and doubtful Providence I know not: Either I shall return again to *Jerusalem*, or I shall not: If I do, then I shall see it again, and enjoy the Lord in his Ordinances there. If I do not, then I shall go to that Place where there is no need or use of those things. And either way it will be well for me, I am content to refer all to the Divine Pleasure, and commit the Issue, be it whatever it will be, to the Lord.

And till our Hearts come to the like resolve, we can have no Peace within. *Commit thy Works unto the Lord, and thy Thoughts shall be established,*

Prov. 16. 3. By Works he means not only every enterprize and buſineſs we *undertake*, but every puzzling, intricate, and doubtful Event we *fear*. Theſe being once committed by an Act of Faith, and our Wills reſigned unto his, beſides the Comfort we ſhall have in the Iſſue, we ſhall have the preſent advantage of a well compoſed, and peaceful Spirit.

But this Reſignation is the difficulty; no doubt of Peace, could we once bring our Hearts to that. And therefore

4. I ſhall here ſubjoyn ſuch Helps and Directions, as may through Gods Bleſſing, in the faithful uſe of them, aſſiſt and facilitate this great and difficult Work.

Firſt Help.

And firſt, *Labour to work into your Hearts a deep and fixed ſenſe of the infinite Wiſdom of God, and your own folly and ignorance.* This will make Reſignation eaſie to you: Whatſoever the Lord doth is by Counſel, *Eph.* 1. 11. his Underſtanding is infinite, *Pſal.* 147. 5. his Thoughts are very deep, *Pſal.* 92. 5. but as for Man, yea the wiſeſt among Men, how little doth his Underſtanding penetrate the Works and Deſigns of Providence? And how oft are we forced to retract our raſh Opinions, and confeſs our Miſtakes? Acknowledging that if Providence had not ſeen with better Eyes than ours, and looked farther than we did, we had precipitated our ſelves into a thouſand miſchiefs, which by its Wiſdom and Care we have eſcaped. It's well for us that the *ſeven Eyes of Providence* are ever awake, and looking out for our good. Now if one Creature can and ought to be guided and governed by another that is more wiſe and skilful than

than himself, as the *Client* by his learned *Counsel*, the *Patient* by his skilful *Physician*, much more should every Creature give up his weak Reason, and shallow Understanding to the infinite Wisdom of the Omniscient God.

It's nothings but our Pride and Arrogance over-valuing our Understandings that makes Resignation so hard. * Carnal Reason seems to it self a wise Disputant about the Concerns of the Flesh, but how often hath Providence baffled it? The more Humility, the more Resignation.

How few of our Mercies and Comforts have been foreseen by us? Our own Projects have come to nothing, and that which we never thought on, or contrived hath taken Place; not our choice of the ground, or skill in weighing and delivering the *Bowl*, but some unforeseen Providence, like a rub in the *Green* was that which made the cast.

* *O quàm sapiens argumentatrix sibi videtur arrogantia humana; præsertim cùm aliquid de gaudiis metuit amittere.* Tert.

Second Help.

Deeply consider the sinfulness and vanity of torturing your own Thoughts about the Issues of doubtful Providences.

(1.) There is much Sin in so doing: For, all our anxious and solicitous Emotions, what are they other than the immediate Issues and Fruits of Pride and Unbelief? There is not a greater discovery of Pride in the World, than in the contests of our Wills with the Will of God. It's a presumptuous invading of Gods Prerogative, to dictate to his Providence, and prescribe to his Wisdom.

(2.) There is a great deal of Vanity in it: All the thoughtfulness in the World will not make one hair white or black: All our discontents will not prevail with God to call back (or as the Word

Word may be rendered) make void his Word, *Iſa.* 31. 2. He is in one mind, *Job* 23. 13. The Thoughts of his Mind are from Everlaſting, *Pſalm* 33. 11.

Third Help.

Set before you thoſe choice Scripture Patterns of Submiſſion to the Lords Will in as deep, yea, much deeper Points of ſelf-denial than this before you, and ſhame your ſelves out of this quarrelling Temper with Providence.

You know what a cloſe Tryal that Providence was to *Abraham*, that called him from his Native Countrey and Fathers Houſe, to go he knew not whither; and yet it's ſaid in *Iſa.* 41. 2. He came to Gods foot, as readily obeying his call, as a Servant when his Maſter knocks for him with his Foot.

Paul's Voyage to *Jeruſalem*, had a diſmal aſpect upon himſelf, he could expect nothing but Bonds and Priſons, as he tells us, *Acts* 20. 23. And a great Tryal it was to the *Saints*, who could not tell how to give up ſuch a *Miniſter*, yet he reſigns up his Will to Gods, *Acts* 20. 22. And ſo do they, *Acts* 21. 14. *The Will of the Lord be done.*

But far beyond theſe, and all other Patterns, what an Example hath our dear *Lord Jeſus* ſet before us in the deepeſt Point of Self-denial that ever was in the World. When the Father gave the Cup of Sufferings into his Hands in the Garden, *Mark* 14. 36. A Cup of Wrath, the Wrath of the great and terrible God, and that without mixture: The very taſte whereof, put Nature into an Agony and Aſtoniſhment, a ſore Amazement, a bloody Sweat; and forced from him that vehement and ſad cry, *Father, if it be poſſible, let this*

this Cup pass; yet still with Submission, *nevertheless not my Will, but thine be done.* O blessed pattern of Obedience, and Resignation to the Pleasure of God! What is your Case to this?

Fourth Help.

Study the singular Benefits and Advantages of a Will resigned up, and melted into the Will of God.

(1.) Such a Spirit hath a continal *Sabbath* within it self: The Thoughts are established, *Prov.* 16. 3. And truly, till a Man come to this, he doth but too much resemble the *Devil*, who is a restless Spirit, seeking rest, but finding none.

It was an excellent Expression of *Luther*, to one that was much perplexed in his Spirit about the doubtful Events of some Affairs of his that were then depending: *Dominus tua omnia faciat, & tu nihil facias, sed sis Sabbatum Christi:* (*i. e.*) The Lord shall do all for thee, and thou shalt do nothing, but be the Sabbath of Christ. It is by this means that the Lord *gives his Beloved sleep*, Psalm 127. 2. He means not the sleep of the Body, but of the Spirit. *Fideles* (saith One upon that Place) *etsi Vitam agant laboriosam, compositis tamen & tranquillis animis in fidei silentio se continent, ac si dormirent:* (*i. e.*) Though Believers live in the midst of many Troubles here, yet with quiet and composed Minds they keep themselves in the silence of Faith, as though they were asleep.

(2.) Besides, it fits a Mans Spirit for Communion with God in all his Afflictions, and this alleviates and sweetens them beyond any thing in the World.

(3.) And surely a Man is never nearer the Mercy he desires, or the Deliverance he expects, (as

(as One truly obſerves) than when his Soul is brought into a ſubmiſſive Temper. *David* was never nearer the Kingdom, than when he became as a weaned Child.

Fifth Help.

Laſtly, *Think how repugnant an unſubmiſſive temper is both to your Prayers and Profeſſions.*

You pray that the Will of God may be done on Earth, as it is in Heaven, and yet when it ſeems to Croſs your Wills or Intereſts, you ſtruggle and fret againſt it. You profeſs to have committed your Souls to his keeping, and to leave your Eternal Concerns in his Hands; and yet cannot commit things infinitely leſs valuable unto him. How contradictory are theſe Things!

Your Profeſſion, as Chriſtians, ſpeaks you to be led by the Spirit, but this Practice ſpeaks you to follow the perverſe Counſels of your own Spirits. O then regret no more, diſpute no more, but lye down meekly at your Fathers Feet, and ſay in all Caſes and at all Times, *the Will of the Lord be done.*

And thus I have, through the Aid of Providence, performed what I deſigned to ſpeak from this Scripture. I acknowledge, my Performances have been accompanied with much weakneſs, yet have endeavoured to ſpeak of Providence the Things that are right. Bleſſed be the Lord, who hath thus far aſſiſted and protected me in this Work

How Providence will diſpoſe of my Life, Liberty and Labours for Time to come, I know not, but I chearfully commit all to him, who hath hitherto performed all things for me.

Poſt-

POST-SCRIPT.

IN Conſideration of the great and manifold Advantages reſulting from an humble and heedful Obſervation of Providence, I cannot but judge it the Concernment of Chriſtians that have Time and Ability for ſuch a Work, to keep written Memorials, or *Journals* of Providences by them; for their own and others uſe and benefit. For want of Collecting and Communicating ſuch Obſervations, not only our ſelves, but the Church of God is damnified and impoveriſhed.

Some ſay, the Art of *Medicine* was thus acquired and perfected: When any one had met with ſome rare *Phyſical Herb*, and accidentally diſcovered the Vertues of it, he would poſt it up in ſome publick Place; and ſo the *Phyſician* attained his skill, by a Collection of thoſe poſted Experiments and Receipts.

I am not for poſting up all that a Chriſtian knows or meets with in his Experience, for (as I have ſaid before) *Non eſt religio, ubi omnia patent.* Religion doth not lay all open; but yet there is a prudent, humble and ſeaſonable Communication of our Experiences and Obſervations of Providence, which is exceeding beneficial both to our Selves and our Brethren.

If Chriſtians in reading the Scriptures, would judiciouſly Collect and Record the Providences they ſhall meet with there, and (if deſtitute of other

other helps) but add those that have fallen out in their own Time and Experience; O what a precious Treasure would these make? How would it antidote their Souls against the spreading Atheism of these Days, and satisfie them, beyond what many other Arguments can do, that *The Lord he is God, the Lord he is God.*

Whilst this Work was under my hand, I was both delighted and assisted by a Pious and Useful *Essay* of an unknown Author, who hath to very good Purpose improved many Scriptural Passages of Providence, which seem to lye out of the road of common Observation: Some Passages I have noted out of it, which have been sweet to me. And O that Christians would every where set themselves to such Work! Providence carries our Lives, Liberties and Concernments in its hand every Moment. Your Bread is in its *Cupboard*, your Money in its *Purse*, your Safety in its enfolding *Arms*; and sure it is the least Part of what you owe, to record the favours you receive at his Hands. More particularly,

Mr. *T. C.* in his *Isagoge.*

(1.) Trust not your slippery Memories with such a multitude of remarkable Passages of Providence as you have, and shall meet with in your way to Heaven. It's true, things that greatly affect us, are not easily forgotten by us; and yet, how ordinary is it for new Impressions to raze out former ones? It was a saying of that Worthy Man Dr. *Harris*, My Memory (said he) never failed me in all my Life; for indeed, I durst never trust it. Written Memorials secure us against that hazard; and besides, makes them useful to others when we are gone. So that you carry not away all your Treasure to Heaven with you, but leave these choice Legacies

cies to your surviving Friends. Certainly it were not so great a loss, to lose your Silver, your Goods and Chattels, as it is to lose your Experiences which God hath this way given you in this World.

(2.) Take heed of clasping up those rich Treasures in a Book, and thinking it enough to have noted them there: But have frequent recourse to them, as oft as new wants, fears or difficulties arise, and assault you. Now, it's seasonable to consider and reflect, Was I never so distressed before? Is this the first plunge that ever befel me? *Let me consider the Days of Old, the Years of Ancient Times*, as *Asaph* did, *Psalm* 77. 5.

(3.) Lastly, Beware of slighting former straits and dangers in Comparison with present ones. That which is next us, always appears greatest to us: And as Time removes us farther and farther from our former Mercies or Dangers, so they lessen in our Eyes, just as the Land from which they Sail, doth to *Sea-men*. Know that your dangers have been as great, and your fears no less formerly than now. Make it as much your business, to preserve the sense and value, as the Memory of former Providences, and the fruit will be sweet to you.

FINIS.

THE

TABLE.

A.

ABuſe *of Scripture puniſhed by Providence*, Page 26
Abuſe *of Providence cautioned*, 91, 92
Afflictions *preventive of Sin*, 93
Afflictions *reſtraints from Sin*, 94
Afflictions *how they purge Corruption*, 97
Adherence *to Creatures checked*, 111
Affections *muſt ſuit Providence*, 137
Afflictive *Providences when ſanctified*, 192
Ambroſe *his Providential Relief*, 89
Andreas *how called to the Miniſtry*, 77
Anticipations *by Religion advantageous*, 45
Aſſiduity *of Providential Care*, 82
Aſpects *of Providence contrary*, 202
Aſſociation *of natural Cauſes*, 17
Atheiſm *checked by Providence*, 174
Auguſtin's *ſtrange Deliverance*, 23
Auguſtin's *Converting a* Manichee, 60

B.

BArbarous *Nations their ſad ſtate*, 39
Bible *providentially miſtaken*, 60
Body *its Elegant ſtructure*, 33, 34
Bolton's *Converſion*, 59
Brethren *their different Tempers*, 195
Bruens *happy Marriage*, 59

Callings

C.

Callings *ordered by Providence*, 74, 75
Callings *ſinful in themſelves*, 76
Callings *Poor, ſome Mens Advantage*, 79
Cautions *about Civil Callings*, 80, 81
Care *of God to be eyed in Providence*, 139
Chriſt *hath his hand ſix ways in Providence*, 188
Children *ſetled providentially in Callings*, 77
Childrens *Duties preſſed*, 53, 54
Communion *with God in Providences. Rules for it, and the ſweetneſs of it*, 157
Committing *to God quieting to us*, 135
Complaints *of painful Callings anſwered*, 78
Comparing *Providences how melting*, 192
Condeſcenſions *of God admirable*, 113, 114, 115
Converſion *two Ways*, 56, 57
Converſion *endears Places and Inſtruments*, 55
Converſion *how great a Mercy*, 71, 72
Content *under all Providences*, 146
Crying *to God what it imports*, 3, 4
Craft *ſinful Providentially defeated*, 129
Curioſity *in prying into Providence*, 153, 154

D.

Dangers *in Extremity*, 3
Dangers *of Death providentially prevented*, 100
Dependance *on Creatures checked by Providence*, 109
Delaies *of Providence relieved*, 143, 144
Delaies *ſink our Hearts*, 226, 227
Devil *buſie with dying Chriſtians*, 206
Diana's *ſhrines what they were*, 75
Diſtruſt *not God in new Difficulties*, 213
Dod's *ſtrange impulſe*, 94
Duty *to advert Providence*, 118
Dying *hour ſweetned by Providence*, 205

E.

EVenneſs *of Spirit how attained*, 245
Embryoes *their Condition*, 36
Encouragements *to wait on God*, 227, 228
Englands *Encomium*, 38, 39
Epicureans *why they denied Providence*, 13
Expectation *from Creatures daſhed*, 111, 112
Eye *how guarded by Nature*, 99

F.

FAculties *ſound, a choice Providence*, 35
Faithfulneſs *of God eyed in Providence*, 140
Faith *two ſignal Acts of it*, 207
Families *providentially aſſigned us*, 46
Foreſight *of Troubles how taken*, 256
Fox *his wonderful Relief*, 88, 89

G.

GOd *leaves not his in-ſtraits*, 134
God *to be owned in all Providences*, 211
Good *Mens Affections over-heated*, 111
Greatneſs *of God diſcovered*, 113, 114

H.

HArmony *of conjugal Affections Providential*, 83
Harmony *of Gods attributes*, 160
Heavenly-mindedneſs *in all Providences*, 145
Heart *how melted by Providence*, 192, 193
Heart *ballanced under Proſperity*, 247
Heart *cheared under ſad Providences*, 249
Heart *quieted in doubtful Providences*, 251
Heart *not under our Command*, 253
Henry *the Second puniſhed by Providence*, 26
Holineſs *improved by eying Providence*, 201, 202

I.

IDiots *the Deſign of Providence in them*, 35, 36
Idle *Life a ſinful Life*, 75
Jewel's *ſtrange Preſervation*, 101
Interpoſitions *of Providence ſeaſonable*, 94

Inobſervanee *of Providence ſinful*, 120
Introductive *Providences remarkable*, 124
Inſtruments *of Providence to be noted*, 125
Immutability *of God in changeable Providences*, 141
Joy *in God under all Providences*, 143
Intereſt *how beſt ſecured*, 136
Junius *his Converſion how effected*, 58

K.

KEepers *Converted by their Priſoners*, 62

L.

LIberality *the beſt frugality*, 135

M.

MArriages *the Appointments of Providence*, 83
Miniſters *removes ordered by Providence*, 63
Mortification *promoted by Providence*, 103, 104

N.

NAtural *Cauſes ſuſpended by Providence*, 15, 16
Naaman's *change how effected*, 57
Nativity *its place providentially ordered*, 39, 40
Neighbourly *Viſits improved by Providence*, 61
Notes *of Attention why affixt to Providence*, 118

O.

OBjections *of Unbelief ſolv'd by Providence*, 172
Obſervations *of Providence Matter of Praiſe*, 119
Obſervations *of Providence endear Chriſt*, 188
Oecolampadius *deſigned for a Merchant*, 77
Obligations *to Duty from Providence*, 211

P.

PArents *Godly what a Mercy*, 49, 50
Papiſts *their Doom*, 40
Parents *Advantages opened*, 47
Parents *ſuffering from Children*, 85
Pareus *deſigned for an Apothecary*, 77
Pleaſures *of a Chriſtian in Providence*, 161

Places *of ſinning Places of ſuffering*, 26
Pleaſing *God our Intereſt*, 214
Perſecutors *baffled by Providence*, 21, 22
Pride *check'd by Providence*, 110, 111
Prayer *muſt Preface buſineſs*, 214
Prayer *furniſhed by Providence*, 121
Proſperity *when ſanctified*, 244
Proſperity *when unſanctified*, 242
Providence *working Good out of Evil*, 162
Providence *purſues the Saints*, 163
Providence *muſt follow Scripture*, 219
Providence *nicks the Opportunity*, 29, 30
Providence *Conſonant to Prayer*, 30
Providence *breaks* Ægyptian *Reeds*, 129
Providence *fails none that truſt it*, 127
Proviſion *for us and ours, what a Providence*, 87

Q.

QUieting *Conſiderations under ſad Providences*, 146
Quieting *Arguments drawn from Providence*, 196

R.

REcognitions *of Providence ſupports to Faith*, 174
Recognitions *of Providence muſt be full*, 122
Records *to be kept of Providences*, 9, 10
Relational *Duties preſſed*, 86
Rebukes *of Providence how uſeful*, 203, 204
Reliance *on God pleadable in Prayer*, 4
Relations *ordered by Providence*, 82, 83
Reſurrection *of Prayers pleaſant to obſerve*, 161
Retributions *of Providence very ſignal*, 25, 26
Reſignation *to God our Duty*, 250
Reſignation *facilitated five Ways*, 251, 252
Rochel *providentially relieved*, 30
Rules *to diſcover the Will of God*, 221, 222

S.

SAmaritans *Converſion how wrought*, 58
Satans *malice over-ruled by Providence*, 65

San-

Sanctification *of Providence how diſcerned*, 128
Scoffing *at Purity puniſhed by Providence*, 26
Scope *of Providence very Conſiderable*, 124
Seaſonable *proviſions of Providence*, 88, 89
Seamens *admirable Preſervation*, 100, 101
Self-denyal *no damage*, 131
A Shepherds *pious Obſervation of Providence*, 34
Spaniſh *Souldiers how Converted*, 58
Soul *its excellent Nature*, 35
Seaſon *ſet for Mercy twofold*, 233
Springs *and Autumns of Providence*, 194
Servant's *running from his Maſter improved*, 62
Spiritual *Mercies of two ſorts*, 229

T.

TArtars *and* Turks *their ſad State*, 41
Dr. Tates *ſtrange experience of Providence*, 30
Temptations *prevented by Providence*, 90
Temptations *narrowly eſcaped*, 96, 97
Tenderneſs *of Providence to the Saints*, 176
Thankſgiving *includes five Things in it*, 175
Tranquillity *promoted by eying Providence*, 196
Truſting *God before Tryal Noble Faith*, 180

V.

VAlue *of* Providence *in diverſe Things*, 122
Venice-glaſs *how uſed by* Providence, 70
Vergerius *his ſtrange Converſion*, 60
Views *of* Providence *twofold*, 9, 10, 11, 12
Vileneſs *of Man diſcovered*, 109, 110
Viciſſitudes *of* Providence *diſorder thoughts*, 247
Unequal *Marriages what a Miſery*, 84, 85
Ungodly *Parents their Sin and Miſery*, 56
Unwillingneſs *of Good Men to ſurrender their Comforts at the call of* Providence, 259

W.

WAles *a ſtrange Converſion there*, 59
Wars, *how* Providence *preſerves in them*, 100

Waiting

Waiting *on God preſt by ten Arguments*, 227
Weak *means ſucceeded by* Providence, 22
Will *of God how diſtinguiſhed*, 217
Will *of God how revealed*, 218
All Winds *ſerve* Providence, 164
Wicked *Men how quieted under croſſes*, 146
Wiſdom *of God to be eyed in* Providence, 137
Word *of God the beſt ſupport in trouble*, 138
Word *of God fulfilled by* Providence, 126, 127
Wiſdom *of providential Appointments*, 90

Y.

YOuth, Providences *then received, greatly to be admired*, 188

A Catalogue of BOOKS *ſold by* Thomas Parkhurſt, *at the* Bible *and* Three Crowns, *in* Cheap-ſide *near* Mercers.

MR. *Baxters* Catholick Theology.

Mr. *David Clarkſons* Practical Diſcourſes in large Folio.

Strong on the Covenant.

Burgeſs on the *Corinthians*.

Taylor on Chriſt's Temptation.

A Dialogue between *Timothy* and *Titus*, about the Articles of the Church of *England*.

Pembroke's Arcadia.

Manton's Third Vol. of Sermons.

Gurnal's Chriſtian Armor.

Dr. *Horton's* 100 Sermons.

Noſtredamus's Prophecies.

Melvil's Memoirs.

Marvel's Poems.

Daille on the *Coloſſians*.

Clark's Martyrology.

The Acts, Deciſions, Decrees, and Canons of the Reformed Churches in *France*; being a moſt Faithful and Impartial Hiſtory of the Riſe, Growth, and Decay of the Reformation in that Kingdom: Their Confeſſion of Faith, Speeches, Letters,

ters, Cases of Conscience, &c. By *John Quick*, Minister in *London*.

Baxter's Church-History and Councils.

——— History of Councils inlarged and defended.

—— Apology for Nonconformists.

—— Second Defence of Nonconformists.

——— Apology against Eight Men.

—— Treatise of Episcopacy.

--Disputations of Church-Government.

——— Life of Faith: First of the Sermons Preach'd before King *Charles* the Second.

—— *English* Nonconformity.

——— Naked Popery.

—— Against *Dodwell* and *Sherlock*.

——— Which is the True Church.

——— Catholick Communion, against both Extreams, in six several Controversies.

——— Moral Prognostication.

——— Search for *English* Schismaticks.

----Farewell Sermon, Published by himself.

——— Mr. *John Corbet*'s Funeral Sermon.

——— Glorious Kingdom of Christ.

—— Reply to Mr. *Tho. Beverly*'s Answer.

—— National Churches.

——— Church Concord.

—— Penitent Confession, and necessary Vindication.

—— Power of a Christian Magistrate.

—— Disputations of right to Sacraments.

——— Disputation of Justification.

—— Church Told against *Bagshaw*.

Ark on the Covenant.

Bulkey on the Covenant.

—— Critical Enquiries.

Boyse's Sermon.

Charlton's Enquiries into Humane Nature.

Clarkson's Practical Divinity of Papists.

——— No Evidence for Diocesan Churches.

A Dialogue between a Protestant and a Jew, and a Papist and a Jew.

Doolittle's Protestants Answer to, *Where was your Church before* Luther.

Fryself's Sermons of Grace and Temptation.

Hum-

Humphry's Mediocra compleat.

--- Peaceable Diſquiſition.

Hales of Religion.

Hudſon on the Church.

Hierom's Life.

Laroque on the Euchariſt.

Lewis's Education of Gentlewomen.

Morgan's Dyalling.

Manning of Predetermination.

Mead's Viſion of the Wheels.

——Sermon at the Union.

Morning Exerciſe againſt Popery.

Owen's ſeaſonable Words for *Engliſh* Proteſtants.

Preſent Nonconformiſts Vindicated.

Pool's *Apology* for *Religion.*

Owen on the 130 Pſalm.

—— Perſon of Chriſt.

—— Of being ſpiritually-minded.

Mr. *Rowlandſon*'s Captivity.

Swan's *Speculum Mundi.*

Wadſworth's Separation no Schiſm.

Swinnock of Regeneration.

Tenniſon of Idolatry.

True Ceſs, or intrinſick Value of all Real Eſtates.

Officium Cleri deſiderium Populi.

Wilſon's Seaſonable Queſtion, a Faſt-Sermon.

—— Conſcience ſatisfied.

—— God, King and Country, vindicated in this preſent Revolution, with ſome Animadverſions on Dr. *Sherlock.*

Troughton's Apology for Nonconformity.

Tarranton's *England*'s Improvement, in two Parts.

Smith's Chriſtian Work, at *Sorrell*'s Funeral.

Barret's Anſwer to *Stillingfleet.*

Waller's Eſſays.

Claude's Defence of Reformation.

Wallis's Theological Diſcourſes on ſeveral occaſions in two Parts.

Jackſon's Annotations on the Bible.

—— On *Iſaiah.*

Vanity, Danger, *&c.* of continuing Ceremonies in the Worſhip of God.

Caſe of *Proteſtants* in *England* under a Popiſh Prince. By Mr. *Clarkſon.*

Eccleſiaſtical Hiſtory of *France.*

Ellis's *Engliſh* School.

Grew's Parable of the Prodigal.